



Father Finn

Father Finn, S.J.

The Story of His Life

TOLD BY HIMSELF

For His Friends Young and Old



Edited, and with a Preface by

DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.



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PREFACE

FRIENDS of Father Finn (and surely every Catholic who ever read one of his books is a loyal and grateful friend of his) will always regret that death cut short his eagerly awaited memoirs. Undoubtedly, had he lived, other chapters would have been added to the book—precious chapters on his associates, the army of friends who filled his life, the children whose careers he helped to shape, his beautifully optimistic philosophy of life. A rough outline of some of these chapters was found among his papers. But it was almost with his dying breath that he dictated the last chapter of the memoirs as they now stand; and God wrote the “Finis” which was to terminate the last written work of His devoted author.

In editing the memoirs, Miss Florence Moran, Father Finn’s faithful secretary, and I have kept in all cases Father Finn’s own words. The memoirs stand essentially as Father Finn wrote them. The intrusion of an editor into the book would be an impertinence. So in these memoirs the reader will find Father Finn speaking to him of his early years, of St. Louis University in the days when it was hardly more than a small high school, of old St. Mary’s emerging from its period as an Indian school, of remote origins and the final creation of his famous fictional characters, of his varied life as a Jesuit, of his labors in the classroom and the

parish, of his splendid quarter-century at St. Xavier's, Cincinnati.

When I say that he speaks to his reader, I mean just that. Father Finn did not, in the strict sense, write his memoirs. He spoke them aloud to his friends. They were the memories of a full and rich life which he had again and again rehearsed to attentive listeners, and which now he spoke to the thousands of unseen friends whom he could not meet, but for whom he felt a deep personal attachment. He talked his memoirs, and the swift pencil of Miss Moran or one of her assistants caught the spoken word and imprisoned it for the interested reader. This fact is enough to explain the easy, familiar, conversational tone which one finds throughout the book.

The sixty-odd years covered by the memoirs were years of staggering world transition. We are farther away, someone has declared, from the eighties and nineties of the last century than we are from the Renaissance or even the thirteenth century. Actually, as one reads these memoirs, the St. Louis University and St. Mary's College of Father Finn's early days seem to belong to another period of history. One can hardly associate these pioneering schools with the huge, modern, educational institutions which have grown out of them.

That in itself brings clearly to our minds the fact that Father Finn was still of the race of pioneers. When he calls those early days at St. Mary's pioneer days, he selects precisely the right word.

Undoubtedly we can be grateful that he lived

in pioneer days. Out of the brave pioneering which was not far removed from the pioneering of the early Jesuits who came to Missouri because the Indians still needed first lessons in civilization, was born in Father Finn a spirit which to the end continued to be the courageous spirit of a pioneer. He pioneered in Catholic literature at a time when Catholic literature in the United States was at a dismally low ebb. He pioneered in Catholic education and built his school on an ideal. Other Jesuits have been proud of the fact that they could walk in his pioneering footsteps. No one will ever know how many young Jesuits, for instance, have been fired to high enterprise and noble achievement by the example of his brave experimenting and adventuring.

Throughout the memoirs one comes upon hint after hint of Father Finn's self-deprecating modesty. In the midst of the chorus of modern self-advertisement this note sounds almost out of tune. There is, however, to anyone who knew Father Finn, nothing forced or false about it. Father Finn seemed not to have an ounce of conceit in his make-up. Perhaps that sadly broken course of studies and the incessant recurrence of illness and pain were given him by God as safeguards for his humility. He seemed to feel that, because his studies had often been sketchy and always hampered by ill health, he was badly equipped for his work. He seemed to regard himself as a broken instrument used by God to show that in His might He did not need the perfect, polished tool.

It never seemed to occur to Father Finn that his triumph over his physical hardships, the fact that he was so sound a scholar in spite of his most discouraging course of studies, was the clearest sign of his great natural gifts. Almost without the opportunities or health of an ordinary Jesuit, he wrote a small library and carved for himself lasting monuments.

Perhaps he has unconsciously given us the secret of his successful life in one simple passage of the memoirs: "From the earliest days of my noviceship to the present I have always thought that if we cast our cares upon the Lord He will not fail us."

The thing which makes that passage noteworthy is that Father Finn lived absolutely in accord with what he believed to be the perfect rule of life. The result seems to have been that the Lord lifted this delicate young man, with his broken and disorganized training as a Jesuit, to heights of distinguished achievement. Like his father St. Ignatius, whom Francis Thompson refers to as one of the world's famous dyspeptics, Father Finn, by his implicit trust in the grace of God, rose above physical disabilities. He was another of the world's great sick men.

One needs to know Father Finn well and love him deeply to get a proper estimate of his comments about his character and its disagreeable angles. But even the chance acquaintance will, when he reads the passages in which Father Finn speaks of himself as an unpleasant young Jesuit, be moved to honest incredulity. No doubt Father Finn sin-

cerely believed the words he wrote; no one else ever will. Father Finn, the gracious, kindly, lovable person, who never, even in the last period of long and tiresome illness, showed anything but a smiling, gentle, courteous face to the world; Father Finn, the friend of all mankind; Father Finn, to whom children ran instinctively! Unpleasant? The whole idea is quite absurd.

But his friends will, in reading those passages, think of parallel instances among the saints. Father Finn, in his humility, says there were times when he was a very unpleasant person; the saints have been known to call themselves the greatest of sinners. In both cases sincerity is obvious. But in both cases the discriminating reader will remember that, though the statements represent honest conviction, they are none the less flatly wrong. Only the deepest and most genuine humility could have kept Father Finn from knowing that he walked through life surrounded by the love and admiration of thousands. And love and admiration do not follow even temporary unpleasantness of character.

Many chapters, as I have already stated, could have been added to Father Finn's memoirs. That chapter on his friends just cries to be written. Few men have been as rich in friendships as he. The boys of old St. Mary's followed him through life. The girls of St. Xavier's dogged his footsteps. Distinguished professional men and newsboys, city bosses and the policeman on the beat, actors and negro crossing-sweepers, little girls and society women, were his personal friends. He made a

brief trip to Hollywood and famous motion-picture stars took him into their confidence. Jackie Coogan gave him, probably without knowing it, the material for a book. "Big Boy," passing through Cincinnati, was brought to see him.

He sat in the club president's box at the Cincinnati ball park and knew every man on the Reds. Jim Tully, ex-tramp and writer, out of his lurid past remembered the kindness of a priest at St. Xavier's who put into his hands, reddened from his task as dishwasher, a copy of Tennyson. The priest, of course, was Father Finn.

Fellow Jesuits, young and old, held him in truest affection. Perfect strangers sought out his office on the certain assumption that he would have time for their problems and difficulties. I have heard it said that he was the best-known man in Cincinnati—and Cincinnati is a city of notables.

Certainly toward the close of his life he was carried along on a wave of friendship. Men and women positively struggled to make life happy and comfortable for him. He had spent his life generously for others, and in so doing he had found the secret of winning and keeping friends.

I shall never forget the first time I walked with him down the streets of Cincinnati. It was a new and startling experience. Here was one man in the world for whom money seemed unnecessary. I had just got off a late train, so we dropped in for lunch at the city's best-known restaurant. We ordered, ate; the proprietor came up, spoke to Father Finn, and wrote his own initials on our

check. We took a taxi, and the driver did not pull his meter flag. We approached a motion-picture theater; the manager ran up, greeted Father Finn effusively in an unmistakably Jewish accent, and begged him to come in and pass on the new film that was being presented. We taxied, at the expense of the taxi company, to the ball park, sat in the box immediately back of the catcher, and were welcomed with a smile. People stopped him on the street to press money into his hands, money not for himself but for his multiplied charities. All told, it was something new in my life, a day that proved to be a long tribute to Father Finn of everybody's friendship.

Yet, I was later told by his intimates, this was not an exceptional day. Father Finn had, hardly knowing it himself, reached a point in the friendship and affection of people, non-Catholic as well as Catholic, where they thought it an honor and a privilege to do for him whatever lay in their power. In the light of all this we smile as we read his comments about his unpleasantness of character. Humility is not always strict truth.

Were I to try to analyze Father Finn's gift for friendship, I should reduce it, quite aside from his notoriously open-handed charity, to two outstanding qualities: He never said an unpleasant thing about anybody, and he invariably found something in the least attractive person which he could, and did, praise.

I seriously doubt if any of his acquaintances can give an instance in which Father Finn spoke ill of

anyone. Men might do him grievous wrong. He waved his hands expressively and with that gesture seemed to wipe out the memory of the ill done him. An occasional false friend played him a low trick. If you brought up the matter and said in bitter terms what you thought of that erstwhile friend, Father Finn's severest comment would be, "Strange chap . . . odd fellow. . . . One never knows why people do unusual things." In fact I myself have heard him make excuses for quite atrocious wrongs and seen him treat with forgiving courtesy men who had deeply hurt him.

Possibly, like many other busy men, he was too occupied with big things to have time to be bothered with petty ones. Certainly, like a sincerely holy man, he did not consider wrongs that were done to him personally as really of any great importance.

If there was anything good to be said of anyone, Father Finn invariably said it. His speech dripped kindness. When he talked of his fellow Jesuits, for instance, the expressions of friendship and regard which you will find running all through these memoirs were constantly on his lips. "Fine fellow . . . extraordinarily brilliant . . . very charitable . . . I like his stuff. . . . How does he do so much work? . . . Clever writer . . . wonderful companion."

With a hospitality rare enough in writers, he loved to welcome new authors especially when they invaded his own field of juvenile fiction. Many an author seems to resent as a personal affront the success of another author in some line of work that

has been considered up to that moment particularly his own. Father Finn, on the contrary, anxiously scanned the horizon for any new writer, even when he sailed out for the first time in a ship that had taken its lines clearly from Father Finn's pioneering craft. Probably there is not a Catholic author in America or England who has not, somewhere among his cherished possessions, a letter or a clipping from the pen of Father Finn praising his work.

One would think that after his long experience with the realities of life (for he had met his share of them; how could he escape them, living as he did shoulder to shoulder with the poverty of a big city?) he would have lost some of his faith in mankind. Not he. He went through life smiling trustfully at everyone he met, and because of that trust people consistently showed him their better side. His friends and even his casual acquaintances somehow tried to live up to his high opinion of them. So it happened that till the day he died he trusted men and women and admired the humble virtues of commonplace humanity with a deeper appreciation than he did when, as an inexperienced, bookish youth, he faced the first little class of disillusioning "roughnecks" at old St. Mary's.

No wonder that, quite without realizing it, he built up about him a staff of devoted, faithful, loyal fellow-workers, men and women, any one of whom would have given life's blood to spare him pain or annoyance. Between him and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune were the bodies

and souls of friends actually shielding him from suffering. And the writers whose books he praised so generously felt the deepest personal affection for him even though they might not know him in the flesh.

The unwritten chapter on his friends would not be complete without a whole section on the boys and girls who filled his life. He refers to them briefly but feelingly in the pages of the memoirs. But we get hardly a glimpse of the boys and girls who were so much a part of the years in Cincinnati.

Wherever he went, he was surrounded by them. His daily walk to and from the school and rectory was a continued triumphal procession. Children fought for the privilege of holding his hands and carrying his bundles. Children hung about outside his office for the moment when he would come out and in passing, pat them on the head. During those last years, whenever he rode in a borrowed automobile to get the afternoon fresh air, he filled the car with the little boys and girls of his beloved school, boys and girls who positively puffed with pride as they rode out in someone's glamorous limousine at the side of their Father Finn.

For him these children produced their entertainments, sang songs, danced Irish dances, played with inexperienced hands on squeaky violins, rehearsed their elaborate plays, and produced their famous musical comedies. They rushed into his office during recess period, and, though he was a sick and

weary man, I never once saw him so tired that he had no smile for them.

He often chose as his office boy some unmanageable youngster in the grades, and the honor of being Father Finn's office boy brought about an almost miraculous reformation. He dictated his letters patiently to the little, inexperienced stenographers from the commercial department, and when they had gained speed under his eyes, he sent them out into the business world with his recommendation.

Every Monday night the parish hall of St. Xavier's was jammed with the youngsters of the neighborhood, who shouted and laughed and wept and screamed with excitement over the motion pictures supplied to him by the booking offices of the city. And when each year the day of the St. Xavier Picnic dawned, young Cincinnati swarmed out to Coney Island, filled every deck and rail of the excursion steamers, and in the joy of the city's biggest picnic, swirled about Father Finn, the youngest and happiest picnicker of the lot.

Throughout the world the friends of Father Finn numbered the young Catholic population of every nation. When it was my privilege to present him to the fourteen hundred student delegates of our first National Sodality Convention in St. Louis, they greeted him as a friend and cheered him to the echo. When he made a trip to Florida in search of health, youngsters were awaiting him at almost every station along the line. And sick though he was, he struggled from the Pullman to see the lit-

tle friends who wanted to shake the hand that had sketched for them their favorite heroes.

There is something almost prophetic about the last lines he dictated for the "St. Xavier Calendar." He was thinking about the boys and girls who had filled those later years as he wrote:

"I could put down some wonderful stories connected with this department [the Commercial Department], but the heroes and heroines of these stories happen to be very much younger than I. Possibly they would not like to be shown up in print, and might in consequence refuse to attend my funeral. I would not like that at all."

With strange significance, this lover of children, in the very last lines he ever wrote, is concerned with a fear that the boys and girls who had crowded the happy days at St. Xavier's might not be present at his funeral. They were there, believe me, by the thousand, crying silently for their dead friend.

Another chapter, of course, could have been written about his "Calendar." Even in the years when his pen was supposed to be resting, he was finding an outlet for the urge to write (an urge that though stifled will still have its way) in the pages of St. Xavier's Church Calendar.

You surely know the drab and level monotony of most church calendars—announcements, clipped articles, stale jokes, flat records of trivial parish events, ancient squibs by those two famous authors "Exchange" and "Anon." If you do, you will realize the real compliment I pay Father Finn's "Calendar" when I say that its monthly appearance was

eagerly awaited by a large audience inside and outside of the parish.

In it the reader found true and pungent literary comment, references to books so new that few had yet heard of them, or a gay shout over some author just discovered. Pithy editorials summed up some current question in a way that settled it forever. In later years Father Finn's intelligent and constructive comments on the motion pictures, though they appeared in this supposedly obscure little monthly, were yet important enough to catch the attention and command the respectful reading of motion-picture producers and czars in New York and Hollywood.

Inevitably "America," the Jesuit national review of the week, made a valiant effort to secure him for its staff, a move that was blocked by the united protests of the people of St. Xavier's. But when the editors of "America" sought to enlist the pen of Father Finn, they were thinking, not of his juvenile books, but of the comment on current events and the literary criticism that had lifted a church calendar out of the dull slough of parish bulletins and made it sparkingly interesting even to those who had never seen or never expected to see St. Xavier's, Cincinnati.

Another chapter, almost necessarily, would be written about Father Finn's varied interests. The old "Nothing human is foreign to me" was certainly true of him. As one reads the memoirs one notices how, without real effort, he swung from a life devoted to boys to a life the capital interest

of which was a Young Ladies' Sodality and a grammar school. That was typical of his remarkable adaptability and breadth of interest.

Sit him down to talk literature, and he glowed. But take him out roughing it on a picnic (as we young scholastics used to do when, prior to his plunge into a new novel, he was resting at Prairie du Chien) and he sat under a tree, eating burned steak, or swam out into the treacherous Wisconsin, or lay on his back smoking and looking at the clouds, a boon companion.

His keen love of sports never flagged, and with equal understanding and appreciation he watched the preparations for a Gilbert and Sullivan opera or for one of Victor Herbert's musical comedies. He talked current events like a city editor, and Dickens as if "Pickwick" had been written yesterday. He loved a good joke and told a story well, and he was a stimulating listener.

He never developed, even to the last, that ancient and tiresome attitude of living in the past, praising the old days and raising horrified eyebrows at the new. On the contrary he kept abreast not merely of events but of popular feelings and movements. He could discuss the latest motion picture with the children, or the latest distinguished novel with a professor, or some new spiritual book with a nun, or a freshly issued magazine with some college man. He even seemed to understand modern young people and like them. He frequently said, and meant it, that the Catholic young people of the present are constantly improving in initiative, reliability,

spiritual interest, manliness, womanliness, all-round Catholic leadership. He had the astonishing ability to get the viewpoint of a college boy and, quite as easily, the viewpoint of a flapper stenographer lately a graduate of his school.

Because of this, young people paid him the compliment of never thinking him old. Even the critical boy and girl of sixteen to twenty-one (to which age anybody over forty is just a little ridiculous) felt that he sympathized with them. Probably the last speech he made in public, his address to the student Sodalists in St. Louis, was a speech in praise of Catholic young people. Father Finn was as young as the day in which he lived and as up to the minute as his own desk calendar.

Now all this preface, if you have followed me thus far, is, merely, I must confess, keeping you from reaching Father Finn's own story. Perhaps I have written a much longer preface than he would have cared to see added to his book.

But if I write at length, it is because I feel that I owe him more than a common debt of gratitude. Like most Catholic boys, of course, my young mind was early filled with the high romances of his boy heroes. In their company I first met the Jesuits whom later, to my great good fortune, I was to join. From these boys of fiction, I learned much of honor and courage and cleanliness of mind and body. I came to believe in the manliness of piety. In their company I spent happy hours and never did I leave them without the implicit resolve to live as they lived and do as they did.

This I shared in common with thousands of other Catholic youngsters in every country. My great debt, however, lies in the fact, that during my sophomore year at college Father Finn came to give our retreat. Later on I had the happiness of telling him that it was the one retreat that ever really mattered to me. I sat through his talks listening as I had never listened before. I made to Father Finn the most important confession of my life, and from the close of that retreat my eyes were set toward the goal of life in the Society of Jesus.

So Father Finn was far more to me than the genial and sympathetic friend who so tactfully disregarded the difference in our ages. He was more than the pleasant companion of picnics and chats and boat trips, more, even, than the kindly critic who watched my first literary strivings and gave me encouragement during days when I thought the going pretty rough and hopeless. He was the wise and skillful retreat master who first set my feet as a young college boy on a straight and sure path toward a happy life.

For the friendship that has lasted during much of my Jesuit life, for encouragement in everything that I have ever attempted, for the inspiration of his own life, I am deeply grateful. But for what that retreat back in 1907 did for me—for that I cannot say an adequate word of gratitude. He knows now, though I only partially succeeded in telling him while he lived, how much that coming of his to Chicago when I was a vague and callow collegian meant to me.

And now, with a gesture, I step aside. Father Finn would speak to you. But as I step aside, I can almost fancy the thousands of his friends crowding round to listen to the rich and colorful experiences of his sixty and more years. Friends, here is Father Francis J. Finn of the Society of Jesus and of the civilized world.

DANIEL A. LORD, S. J.

A complete list of Father Finn's books will be found in the Bibliography.

CHAPTER I

The Beginning of All

IN THE centuries that have passed, many men and many women consecrated to God have favored us with their recollections. Of practically all of them one might say that they wrote because they had done great things for the glory of God, or had lived lives of heroic sanctity, or had worked miracles, or had experienced visions and made prophecies; while practically all of them, it may be stated, wrote under orders of their superiors.

Now I am undertaking to write my own recollections, but I do not feel quite sure that I am favoring the present generation or the generations to come. The shoe, I believe, is on the other foot; more probably they will favor me by reading my recollections. Also, so far as I know, and to my mind there is no doubt about it, I have not done great things for the glory of God, nor have I lived a life of heroic sanctity, nor have I worked miracles of any sort, nor has God vouchsafed me visions, revelations or prophecies. Finally, I have not written under the orders of my superiors.

I can say, though, that my superiors in their kindness of heart have approved of my undertaking this work. Possibly they are humoring me. On the face of it, it would seem that I am not overburdened with that exquisite virtue which is called modesty.

I am no shrinking violet hidden from the eye; nor am I in any sense fair as the star nor the only one shining in the sky. The only claim I can make for myself in setting down my recollections is that of originality; and, in my opinion, there are times when it is better to be original than to be modest.

This is the day of the average man; and if the average man happens at the same time to be a Religious who gives us the ordinary ups and downs and ins and outs of the religious life, it may contribute to autobiography something so far not attempted in prose or rhyme. It may be, too, that readers of autobiography that has to do with the religious and ecclesiastical are apt to be dismayed by the thought of embracing the religious life. It may strike them that such a life is one of high heroics. My modest story—if by any force of language it may be called modest at all—may give them a more encouraging orientation.

I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on the fourth day of October in the year 1859, being the second son of John Finn and Mary Josephine Finn (née Whyte). The first child, John, lived long enough to become invested with his shining baptismal robe. I think my father must have been quite proud of me; for he presented fifty dollars to the priest who baptized me; and John Finn, at that time, was by no means a wealthy man. In fact he did not own a house of his own. He and my mother were boarding with a good woman named Mrs. Cooney, whom I remember as a woman with a well-developed case of asthma. My advent into this world changed



The House in which Father Finn was born

the economic policy of the Finn family. My father, almost at once, bought a house in Gamble Street, where I spent my earliest years and from which I gleaned my earliest memories.

There are some things connected with my early childhood which I do not clearly remember myself but which have been established in my memory by hearsay. My father, like my mother, had left Ireland, poor famine-stricken Ireland, to wage the battle of life under more favorable circumstances. An orphan, he brought from Ireland some five or six brothers and one sister. He was the head of the family. I came into contact with his sister and himself only. The others got lost in the melting pot, and, so far as I know, never did anything to attract public notice or excite private admiration. They were slightly below the average.

This, however, was not true of my sire. He was a man of energy and personality, and was, during the Civil War, a candidate of the Democratic Party for the mayoralty of St. Louis. He was defeated; for the Civil War, so far as St. Louis was concerned, had ruined the Democratic Party. In those early years he had a smaller office; he was an alderman and president of the Board of Health. It happened that during his term there was a cholera epidemic raging in the city. John Finn rose nobly to the occasion, so nobly that, when the epidemic had passed away, grateful citizens, with all manner of pomp and circumstance, presented him with a silver set in commemoration of his heroic activity. The silver set is still in the family, and it has al-

ways given me a sort of thrill. As I write, I grin at the thought that I never did anything nearly so heroic in all my life.

I remember also, in connection with this, that while I was spending a few weeks in Omaha, where my eyes were delighted with the spectacle of Indians and squaws roaming the streets in their native habiliments, there broke out one day in one of the main streets a fire. It was some sort of stable. Horses, so far as I know, have no instinct when it comes to facing a fire. They won't come out themselves nor will they willingly be led from the scene of danger. My father, happening to pass that way, dared the danger of the flames, blindfolded a few of the horses and brought them out in time.

He always was a brave man. There is nothing in my memories to make me think I resemble him in this respect. In fact I was rather the other way. He was very fond of horses, kept a good stable. I myself found it an ordeal to pass the horses as they stood in their stalls. I felt that I was taking my life in my hands and that one kick would do for me. And yet, in the days when I was newly breeched, I must have had some sort of courage. Urged on by my father's sister, who then resided with us and was a militant Catholic, I would, so I have been told, venture forth to meet any strange boy of my size who ventured into the neighborhood, and interrogate him as to his religion. If he said he was a Catholic I greeted him with what cordiality I had. But if he said he was a Protestant, there was a fight. If I licked him, my aunt was

jubilant and, no doubt, rewarded me. If he got the better of me, my aunt gave me another licking. All of this is hearsay, but I do remember distinctly that from the age of six or seven I had a strong distaste for fighting.

My early years were marked by a great love for flowers and some taste for music. As to the music, I must humbly confess that the instrument which thrilled my youthful soul above all others was the bass drum.

I am now going back to what I believe to be my earliest recollection. Possibly I would, in the ordinary course of life, have forgotten it, but the family talked about it so much afterwards that it was lodged very strongly in my memory. I must have been three or at most four years of age, when there came past our home a troop of soldiers headed by a brass band. The blare of trumpets aroused my soul; the boom of the bass drum raised me to heights where I lost track of home and duty. I must have been at play behind our house when the magical strains struck my ears. I must also have been in dishabille. At any rate I had no hat, and I was bound upon following the magic band. I wanted a hat. It did not occur to me to go into the house and get one in the regular way. I fished one (an ancient thing, no doubt) out of the ash barrel, clapped it on my head and, filled with military ardor, fell into rank behind the soldiers. The boom of the bass drum must have lent strength to my legs.

I followed that procession all the way downtown

to the levee, where the soldiers marched onto a gun-boat. Like the monk of legend, who was carried away by the song of a bird so that for him time and space ceased to be, I followed and would, without qualm of conscience, have gone down the Mississippi River had not a policeman stayed me just as I was leaving the shore. He asked me my name. I told him quite frankly that my name was Frank. When he asked, "Frank what?" I had no satisfactory answer. Then I launched into description. I told him my father kept horses and said some edifying things about my mother which have escaped my memory.

The guardian of the law was a very pleasant man. He at once enlisted my sympathies, got me some candy, and led me off to a police station, where I was treated with much kindness and consideration and thought that I was having the time of my life.

In the meantime there was consternation in the Finn household and a bellman was parading the streets ringing his bell and yelling for any knowledge of Frank Finn. I was a lost boy. Of course, I was in due time brought home; but what my father did to me I am not going to set down in type. It was a glorious hour anyhow—certainly my first, and possibly my most daring adventure. The years have passed by, but I still love music and have a knack of meeting nice policemen.

I also carry from those days a memory of the battle or skirmish of Camp Jackson. Young as I was, I aligned myself very positively with the de-

fenders of the South. My father, it is true, was a Unionist. So, too, was my mother. But my nurse, a widow named Mrs. Condron, whom all of us children called "Connie," was a fire-eating Southerner. From her I got what ideas I had of the war between the North and the South, with the result that I loved Jackson and Lee and despised General Grant. I recall the skirmish of Fort Jackson. Nearly everybody in the neighborhood went out to see the fight, and quite a number were brought back in ambulances. The impression made upon me was that the fight did particular harm to neither the soldiers of the North nor of the South. It was the innocent bystander who was damaged.

There is one memory of these days which stands out clear and unforgettable. It was a remark made by my grandfather, who to me was incalculably old, although as a matter of fact he must have been in the middle sixties. He had just finished "Dombey and Son" by Charles Dickens. As he finished the last sentence and closed the book he rose and said, "This is the finest book I ever read in my life."

The impression made upon me was extraordinary. "What a wonderful book," I reflected, "that must be! Why, grandfather has been reading books all his life. And look how old he is. If that is the most remarkable book he ever read, it must be a very remarkable book indeed." I could not read at that time; but, through all the years that followed, I carried in my head the memory of "Dombey and Son" and a high ideal of Charles Dickens.

That remark of his had a tremendous influence on my early life.

In the meantime the family had increased. My sister Kate and, after her, my sister Teresa made their appearance in the home; and, living next door to us, Mr. and Mrs. John Daly became the proud parents of my cousin Dick. It was not many years before the four of us formed into a gang quite able to take care of ourselves. But our ways were not the ways of our elders; and frequently they held a council of war and we were all summoned to their presence and cross-examined. It was in this way that we began to learn that there were some things that were right and some things that were wrong. When things were wrong, I was promptly picked out as the ringleader. If there was any punishing to be done—and with justice I must admit that there frequently was—I bore the brunt of the penalty.

My simple home life was broken in these days by a visit to Omaha. I think I must have spent a month with my father and mother in that then semi-civilized town. We lived in a hotel, the only one there, I believe, and I derived great excitement from spelling out the menu card. There were many sorts of omelets designated on that printed sheet and I invariably called for champagne omelet. Champagne omelet still exists on menu cards, but in those days it existed on the card alone. In vain did I order it day after day. Thus began the first period of my disillusionment.

There was in the hotel at that time a striking-

looking gentleman with long white hair. He was Professor Fowler, great phrenologist. Phrenology in those days had the vogue which Freudism has attained at the present writing. Of course nothing would do my father but to have my head examined. Professor Fowler left no bumps or depressions untouched. Then he wrote an essay on me, pointing out my character, my disposition and my future career. Unfortunately this valuable document is lost. But my mother read it to me many a time, and I recall that the professor said I was troubled with a sort of disease called "I can't—I can't do this, I can't do that." The venerable old man was right. He also said that my head was one of the most extraordinary he had ever examined. I fancy that he said this of many another head.

One prediction of my future which rather startled me and which I will never forget was that I was destined to marry the cousin of an Amazon. In this the professor was clearly wrong; nor is there any possibility of his prediction ever coming true.

I remember my return to St. Louis. It was a thrill to come back to the old town, a thrill to see the old houses and the old places of my early activities, an ecstasy to meet my sisters and my cousin and my aunts.

At this period of my life, from six to eight years of age, I had very little religion. My mother was a saintly woman, but so far as I was concerned, her sanctity was not contagious. My first experiences at school were not especially agreeable. I was a

member, in those early days, of St. Malachy's Church, and when the parish school opened I was one of the first pupils to be enrolled. The parish school of that day was something to which one cannot at the present point with pride. It had all the merits and defects of the rural public schools which we find here and there all over our country. There was one teacher and he was hopeless.

I remember my first confession. We were ordered into line one day and brought down to the church. The information I carried with me was that I was to tell my sins. This was authentic. Sympathetic schoolboys got it into my head that after confession the priest would take me down in the cellar and lash me. I entered with dread and left much improved in spirits; there was no castigation.

If I distinguished myself in any way while attending St. Malachy's School, I fail to remember it, and no one has ever reminded me of it. One fine afternoon I played hooky. This was my second adventure and it ended with a like sad result. On reaching home that afternoon, my mother accused me pointblank. There was nothing for me to do but to plead guilty. Even at that age, and wanting as I was in religion, I was not given to lying. I think my father took up the case at that juncture. I have never played truant since.

Came a day, as the movie writers would have it, when I learned to read. Along with this new gift came a period of sickness, and I buried myself in what books I could get. My beloved nurse Con-

nie fell dangerously ill at this time. Having made her peace with God and convinced she was no longer for this world, she disposed of many of her belongings. To me she gave five or six books, among them "Fabiola," by Cardinal Wiseman, "Scalp Hunters," by Marion Leeds, and "Rosemary," by Huntington.

Connie recovered, but I kept the books; and with the reading of "Fabiola" came a new period in my life. The beautiful story of those early Christian martyrs had a profound influence upon my life. Religion began to mean something to me. Since the day of reading "Fabiola," I have carried the conviction that one of the greatest things in the world is to get the right book into the hands of the right boy or girl. No one can indulge in reading to any extent without being largely influenced for better or for worse. Only yesterday, just before I took up these recollections, word came to me that a brilliant young man, an outstanding student of our college in Cincinnati, had lost the faith. I was more shocked than astonished. I had known the boy well and had thought much of him. But I had also known that even in his callow youth he had read books against faith, books dangerous to morals, and books of every kind provided they had some claims to literary merit. In a word, he had browsed without discriminating between the good and the poisonous. The result was as might have been expected.

From the day of Connie's bequest I became a ravenous reader. At the age of seven or eight I

made nothing of devouring books which appealed to children of the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. I began to rise in the estimation of my parents. They conceived the idea that I was a very gifted lad. Of course I did nothing to disabuse them.

In our neighborhood was a young woman named Miss Carmenia Hood, who started a select school. Nothing, so my father thought, was too good for a youth of my promise; so to the select school I was promptly sent; and there for a year or two, as a flower, I blushed unseen. In a word, no one found me out. I liked my teacher very much, but cared very little for the lessons. My occupation was to read and read and read. So it was that, as a boy of eight, I had a rather remarkable vocabulary. The boys with whom I consorted called my attention to this defect or perfection as in their judgment the case might seem to be. In any event my parents and relations were looking to the day when I would set the river on fire.

One memory more I carry of those days when I lived in Gamble Street. It is a memory of a confession. When I had whispered my crimes to the priest and received absolution, I left the box feeling like a morning star. For years the effect was almost magical. It was the greatest thrill of my early days.

When I was about nine years of age, we moved to 2529 Pine Street, at that time the most beautiful residence section of St. Louis. The house is still there, but the beauty is departed. When I go to St. Louis now and then and pass up Pine Street

from Twenty-fifth to Twenty-ninth, my heart sinks. The whole neighborhood, at that time a place of beauty, is changed.

It was at this new residence that I developed into an author. I had my little desk and writing materials; and there one blissful summer I sat me down day after day and wrote some forty or fifty pages of a wonderful Indian story with a besieged blockhouse and savage Indians who knew how to remove the scalp with precision and dispatch, and wonderful white men who could hit a penny at a hundred yards' distance.

I never read the story myself, for the simple reason that I could not read my own writing. But my uncle could. John Daly was a printer, and a printer could read manuscripts which would defy a Philadelphia lawyer. Once a week, then, my mother, my father, my aunts, and other distinguished grown-up people would assemble in the house and Uncle John, who was something of an elocutionist, would read my precious manuscript. I had no intention of being humorous in my story, and consequently I was very much puzzled by the howls of laughter which greeted many of my sentences. Of course I never finished the story; but for a boy of eight or nine, it was, no doubt, not without its merits. At any rate, when at the age of ten I was entered at St. Louis University, the family expected that of all the students attending that historic institution I would be the shining light.

CHAPTER II

The Troubled Sea of Learning

THE day on which I was entered at St. Louis University, one month before reaching the age of eleven, is one of the memorable dates of my life. Mr. Peter J. Hert, the Belgian consul, my father, and my uncle Mr. John Daly escorted me to Ninth Street and Washington Avenue with pomp and circumstance. We entered the Jesuit parlor. Presently the Reverend Father Stuntebeck, president of the institution, entered. The sight of him appalled me. To me he was a very big man and had what I considered a tiger eye.

After the customary round of introductions, during which he made me feel quite uncomfortable, he departed, to be succeeded by the Reverend Father Joseph Zealand, the vice president. Father Zealand was very tall and as straight as a poker. The fact that both were Catholic priests of a kind that I had never seen before added to my discomfiture.

Having been duly registered in the rudiments class, the equivalent of the present seventh grade, I was left by the Belgian consul and my near relations to my own resources. I was then ushered into the building proper and placed in line with a crowd of effervescent boys awaiting their turn to buy their books from the treasurer. Some of the

boys were overboisterous. Suddenly from the office of the treasurer there emerged another man clad in cassock and cincture who dashed into the crowd and administered a slap on the jaw to one of the most recalcitrant students, after which he disappeared into his office.

"What manner of men," I asked myself, "are these Jesuits? Two of them that I have already met are too big and the other one is brutal." That he was brutal was my first impression of Father Tehan, the kindest, the gentlest, and the most loyal friend of boys that I ever met in my life.

I think it must have been the next day that I was ushered into class with Mr. Wienman, a Jesuit scholastic, as my teacher. Mr. Wienman, as I afterwards learned, was not a highly intellectual man; nevertheless he proved to be a splendid teacher and exercised upon all of us boys an influence that made for good morals and good conduct. I liked him very much.

St. Louis University, so called because before the war it had a medical school and other university departments, was really at that date a high school. More than that, it was receiving boys who today would be fit candidates for the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. It was also a boarding school. Among the boarders were very many from the South—Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, and old Mexico.

There were traditions in the school, one of them being that a newcomer was more to be pitied than censured. The old boys looked with scorn upon the new ones. Also, when the first snow fell, they

made it their duty to duck every newcomer by way of initiation. It so happened that almost the only friend I had in the school was the son of the Belgian consul, a year or so older than myself and an "old boy." I received scant consolation and help from him. In fact he, with two other boys, dogged my steps as I walked home from school, made remarks intended for my ears not at all pleasing to my vanity, and indulged in various sorts of pantomime to take away whatever serenity of spirit I happened to possess. I bore it very meekly. I was persecuted, outnumbered and had no desire whatever for a fight. In those days fighting was a much more popular pastime among the youth than it is today and very few newcomers got through their initiation without some passage-at-arms.

At the time of my entering St. Louis University I was in appearance a very delicate youth. In fact the boys of my immediate neighborhood called me Skinny, a very appropriate title. For the preceding three years I had, like Hamlet, forgone all custom of exercise and had buried myself in my books. I was a lover of romance.

My coming to St. Louis University changed to some extent this manner of living. First of all, I walked to school in the morning, walked back at noontime, returned after my dinner, and once more saved my street-car tickets for other purposes, trudging back in the afternoon to my home. Also, I found in the small yard of St. Louis University a sort of open-air gymnasium. There was a turning pole which caught my eye. Also, there was

an instrument called parallel bars. I at once took to these two instruments of exercise and gave the time allowed to what they called "recess" to exercising my muscles.

The three young gentlemen, the "oldcomers" who had dogged my steps, took an undisguised interest in all of my movements and in various ways made my attempts at athletics unpleasant. One of them, a bully by nature, came behind me as I was straddled on the turning pole and gave me a shove, the result of which was that I landed on my head. This was too much. I waited for him after school at Ninth Street and Washington Avenue, and when he rounded the corner I made a dash at him. I expected a good trouncing, for he had a reputation as a fighter. To my astonishment he turned tail and fled, and I dashed after him. Getting him within proper reach, I gave him a kick which sent him sprawling. After that he troubled me no more.

From that day the petty persecution became noticeably less. I had, as it were, won my spurs. However, it came to pass one day that I had some sort of run-in with the son of the Belgian consul. I forget what it was, but he assured me that he was going to wait for me after school. And he did. At Ninth Street and Washington Avenue, as I rounded the corner, Charlie, with a great flourish of fists, attacked me. Expecting another licking, I nevertheless stood my ground and for a few minutes fists were flying wildly. I had got a bloody nose and he a black eye when we were separated by a big boy. Now it may have been that he got

the bloody nose and I the black eye, but the fact remains that the contest was in popular estimation a draw, and from that day forth we remained bosom friends. All this happened in the first few weeks of school.

I continued attending St. Louis University until I was seventeen years of age, but there was no more fighting. My initiation received recognition from the entire student body. In the meantime I walked to and from school three or four times a day, invested my car tickets in eatables, and ceased to merit the title of Skinny. The long walks and the exercise on the turning pole and parallel bars developed my strength and muscles. In a few months I looked well and was quite healthy.

And here let me set down one of the sins of my early youth. It was in these early days at St. Louis University that I took to the use of tobacco. I did it with a guilty feeling. I knew that it was wrong for me to do so, for I knew that my parents would not tolerate it. But for three months I indulged in the occasional use of the cigarette. Why? The only answer I can give is that, from the time I was able to toddle to the present day, I always hankered after a cigarette. Surely it is not an inherited trait. My father, a light smoker, never touched a cigarette in his life. My mother belonged to a generation of women who had no conception of a lady's indulging in tobacco.

When three months had passed, I went to confession. It was the custom in those days to send boys who had not made their First Communion

to confession every three months. After the reception of the sacrament, I gave up, with a heroism which I cannot but admire, the habit of tobacco. But the desire, the craving for my Lady Nicotine never left me.

There is another dark mark in the history of these days. My father, my mother, my sisters, my cousins and my aunts found me out. Knowing me for a book lover they had looked forward with confidence to my making a mark in my class. When it came to the reading of the notes in October or possibly November, I was among those who "also ran." I received no distinction of any kind. In fact I doubt whether I was given what is called a count card. Moreover, my bulletin informed my parents that I talked too much in class and spent much of the time dreaming.

Then began for me a period of much misery. My father, with some show of justice, arrived at the opinion that I was wasting my time in reading works of fiction. I say "with some show of justice," for in those days I could literally bury myself in a book. For instance, on Thursday, which was the full holiday of the school, I would, after a hasty if plenteous breakfast, hide myself away with a book and read until dinner time. After dinner I repeated the same process. Supper over, I went to my room and read; read until my mother came on the scene and ordered me to put out the light. In those days I had a power of absorption which long ago deserted me. I have noticed the same gift in other boys. Never, though, in a girl. Once I got

interested in a book, there might be conversation, dancing, music and all sorts of things going on about me; my soul was far away sailing on the magic ocean of fantasy. Many a time I have been addressed by Mother or Father without being brought back to reality. They had to shout at me or shake me to drag me out of the realms of fairyland.

It was then that I discovered Charles Dickens, a discovery led up to, no doubt, by the unforgettable remark of my grandfather concerning "Dombey and Son." I began with "Nicholas Nickleby." Oh, how I loved that book! I must have read it, between the ages of eleven and seventeen, at last a dozen times. Next to "Nicholas Nickleby" in my affections came the "Pickwick Papers." I had just about finished "Nicholas Nickleby," when news came from England that Charles Dickens had died. My uncle, John Daly, informed me solemnly that, when Dickens had learned that a small boy of eleven was reading his books with enthusiasm, he got a heart attack and succumbed to it at once. For some time I was worried about this. As I was not wholly convinced of the truth of my uncle's assertion, there lingered in me a feeling that perhaps there was something in it.

It was also at this time my father resorted to drastic measures. His idea was to cut me off from all reading outside of my class books. My mother induced him to make a compromise, so that for several weeks I was limited to one hour a day. How I watched the seconds. The whole family council was against me. There was only one man who came



"I would hide myself away with a book"

to my help, and that man was Father John Van Krevel, at that time a young scholastic and one of the prefects in the junior division of the university. He said, and I loved him ever after for saying it, "Let the boy read. When he grows up, who knows but he may become a writer."

So, after much consultation and argument, I gradually got back to my beloved books, and for my six or seven years in attendance at St. Louis University mine was a youth sublime. I lived in a marvelous dreamland. Dickens, of course, was my favorite. But there was Washington Irving, and Prescott, and Cooper, and any number of juvenile writers, Rogers, Alger, *et al.* Every week I purchased a copy of "The Boys' and Girls' Weekly" and of two English juvenile publications. It was nothing for me to carry on at that time the reading of eight, nine, or ten serials and keep track of them all. Ofttimes, when I had four or five hours straight before me for reading, I would set myself at my desk with six or seven different novels beside me and would read an hour or so from each one. Today I find it hard to read a single novel, if I stretch my reading over several days, without losing track of the plot three or four times during the reading.

It was also in these golden days that I organized a library for the youth of the neighborhood. I don't remember what the charges were, but I do know that the library was a great success and that the boys and girls availed themselves of this my

first essay in the matter of diffusing good literature. I have been organizing libraries ever since.

Well, I just managed to get through the rudiments class. I am sure that Mr. Wienman considered me a very dull boy, while I considered him a very gifted man. Then the following year I began my first year of Latin under lovable Father Harts. Father Harts and I were good friends. His friendship, however, did not lead him to consider me in any way talented. He insisted, with perfect justice, that I was a dreamer and inattentive in class. The fact of the matter is that, when I did not care for a special branch of study, it was borne in upon me that I could not learn it—a sad case of autosuggestion. I did not like arithmetic. Consequently, feeling sure that I could not learn it, I did not learn arithmetic.

In the following year, my third at the university, Father Harts was my teacher once more; and once more I showed my ability at escaping any sort of class honors. I was below medium. The only work I did for my classes in those days was to write my themes or compositions at home. These themes had to be handed in. As to the lessons I took my chances on them. Often I took the street car, a twenty-five minutes' ride to school in the morning, and ran over the lessons for the day. All of these things I regarded as an interruption to my reading and literature.

I was thirteen years of age, would celebrate my fourteenth birthday on the coming October fourth, when I returned to the third academic class, with

Mr. John P. Frieden, afterwards one of the most celebrated Jesuits in the Missouri Province, as my teacher.

In a way I was well equipped for that year. No boy in the class was better read than myself. I knew my Dickens and Prescott and Cooper and Irving. Shakespeare was no stranger to me. I had read and seen "Hamlet," "Othello" and "Lear." The great Edwin Booth was the actor who, by his superb art, when I was eleven years of age, had urged me on to read these great tragedies. Moreover I had a facile pen. I could dash off an essay of four or five pages in a few minutes.

There was in the class with me a very remarkable boy, Daniel Lowry. He came from an orphan asylum in St. Louis. Being literary to the finger tips, he aroused my interest. In a short time he became the best friend I ever had. After class each day we walked home together. The orphan asylum happened to be situated on the road leading to my home. These walks were happy; we talked literature and then more literature. Daniel Lowry was in studies the leader of the class. I was, I believe, at the foot of it. It was a large class; nearly all the boys in it were much older than myself. I often recall, not without a grin, that there was another boy in the class who appeared to be as stupid as I was. The strange thing in connection with this is that the two of us, both alive today, are the only two that were ever heard of in the years that followed. He is one of the really distinguished lawyers of St. Louis.

To use the language of many a fond mother whose children have been entrusted to my care, Mr. Frieden "had a pick on me,"—that is, I thought so. I cordially disliked my teacher. One day he made a show of me in arithmetic. Mortified and discouraged, I went to the prefect of studies and asked to be let down to the second-year Latin class in arithmetic. My proposal caused quite a commotion. Mr. Frieden himself brought me to his room and did everything, as I now see it, in the way of kindness and encouragement, to cause me to change my plans. But my heart was hardened against him. I do not think that in my whole life I ever came to hate a man. But if I did, that man was Mr. Frieden. Many and many a year afterwards he became my dearest champion and friend. Of course I was wrong in my stand towards him.

It was also in this year that I deteriorated, not only in studies but in everything else. I lost all taste for study, all ambition to go on. Discouragement faced me. The "I can'ts" of Professor Fowler were in full possession. During my first three years at the University I came to conceive a great admiration for the Jesuits. I loved them. Making my First Communion during my first year at the college, I had developed a high religious sense; and during those three years the one secret ambition of my heart was to become a member of the Society of Jesus. That ardent desire grew cooler and cooler gradually during my year in the first academic, so that at the end of the season I had abandoned all idea of my vocation.

In the meantime matters were not going well with my father. He had gone on the bonds of a number of men who failed to make good. Furthermore, he had taken a big plunge in the pork-packing business, at that time having many characteristics of the stock exchange of the present day, and had, I believe, lost very heavy sums of money. It looked at that time as though he would have to live on the interest of his debts. So it came to pass that my desire to discontinue studies and his lack of ready money to carry on my education brought about a change in my manner of living. I became office boy to John J. Daly, my uncle.

I think I must have remained in this position for about eight months, during which time I was quite successful as a bill collector for the firm and became proficient in smoking cigarettes. What spirituality I had acquired during my three years at the university had almost disappeared. In fact I was going down. I haven't the least doubt that, had the change not come, I should have reached the point where I would have become and remained one of the pawns in the world's strife. But a change did come. My father was elected sheriff of the city, and I was at once packed off to school again. I returned to the university about the first of May, but not to the classical department. As I have already said, I had apparently lost my vocation. There was no aspiration in my mind for the higher life. So I entered the commercial course. Father Tehan—a most lovable man—was my teacher. Once more the splendid influence of the Jesuit train-

ing began to make itself felt. I joined the sodality again. I began once more to frequent the sacraments. In a few weeks my whole outlook on life was changed. Once more the desire to become a Jesuit returned.

In the following September I went back to the classical department and once more entered what was then known as the First Academic. I had made this class under Father Frieden, but with no special success in any branch of study. Furthermore, I had at my own request gone to the lower grade in mathematics. Finally, there had been a year's intermission since my study of Latin and Greek. Therefore, though others counseled me to go to a higher grade, I insisted upon reviewing the whole year.

Mr. Edward Gleason was my teacher. Truth compels me to tell that I did not like Mr. Gleason. He had no hold upon me of any sort. However, I had already learned a life lesson by neglecting studies under Mr. Frieden because I did not like him. Reflection on the matter forced me to see that I was not punishing the teacher but myself. After all, I was not going to school to please my teacher. I was attending to get an education. So the fact that I did not like Mr. Gleason in no way interfered with my studies. There was no enthusiasm on my part. I did what I thought was enough to get along and to pass my examinations. The rest was literature, ninety-five per cent. of which was Charles Dickens.

During those days I was irritatingly cheerful

and, towards my teacher, none too respectful. I remember one day that Mr. Gleason went to the board and covered himself with chalk and perspiration in solving some sort of algebraic problem.

At the end of it, and it was an interminable sort of an affair, he said, "Well, boys, do you understand this?" I modestly held up my finger. "Well, Finn?" "Yes, sir," I said. Mr. Gleason made some remarks about me which were not exactly complimentary. They left me perfectly happy.

On another occasion there was some sort of lesson in geography, of which, I may say, I knew absolutely nothing. The one next to me was being questioned.

"What about the soil of this state?" inquired the professor.

The unfortunate youth had no views about the soil of any state. He was dumb. I had my book before me and cheerfully whispered to him, "It is rocky."

"It's rocky," said the boy.

"Yes?" inquired the professor, wishing to get further information.

The boy was dumb again. Then I came to his assistance once more.

"Tell him it's very rocky," I growled.

"It's very rocky," said the boy.

Mr. Gleason had heard me. He turned the fires of his wrath upon me. He indulged in sarcasm. It was the year of the centennial in Philadelphia, and with proper ornamentation and an easy flow

of language he informed the class that I was a centennial genius.

Mr. Gleason was really a fine teacher; he had a splendid mind. I do not think that he liked me, nor can I imagine why he should have liked me. On the whole, taking myself all in all, I fancy I must have been quite a disagreeable hobbledehoy.

In the following September I entered the poetry class, Mr. William Poland, S. J., being my professor. It was my best year at St. Louis University. Mr. Poland was a lover of literature. Under his inspiration I made a course of reading which was really valuable to me, so I may say that by the end of that year I was much better read than most of the boys of my age and class of that period, and ever so much better read than the boys of today.

I had the greatest respect for Mr. Poland's opinion. When he spoke, I listened. From the beginning of that term I was easily the leader in English composition and was good enough to get on in the other studies. Towards the middle of the school year something happened that made me change my whole manner of life. Reverend Charles Coppens, my confessor and the director of the Sodality to which I belonged, called me to his room one day.

"Finn," he said, "I want to tell you something. The other day, in recreation, someone said that he thought you were thinking of becoming a Jesuit. Father Tom O'Neill, our provincial superior, overheard the remark and observed that he thought

you would hardly do. He said he did not think you had brains enough to be admitted."

I looked at Father Coppens not without confusion. After all, I reflected, the provincial was probably right.

Father Coppens sought to console me and said that, while I was good in English, I had probably paid too little attention to Latin. He added that Latin was very necessary to anyone studying for the priesthood and more necessary still for a member of the Society of Jesus. I was forced to admit that I had done very little, in fact nothing beyond what was required of me in that particular branch.

"Now," said Father Coppens, "I have been thinking about your case. Suppose you read a little extra Latin every day."

The criticism of the provincial had gotten under my skin. I was only too eager to take advice.

"Certainly," I said, "I will be glad to do it."

"And," continued Father Coppens, "here is another idea. How about using a Latin prayer book?"

I replied to the effect that that was a splendid idea.

"Very good," continued my spiritual father. "There are several Latin prayer books on the market, but the best is 'Cœleste Palmetum.' You will find that Fox [a prominent Catholic publisher of St. Louis] carries copies."

"I'll get one," I said. And I did.

Father Coppens himself supplied me with a Latin author. The style was simple and not too difficult. From that day on I used my "Cœleste Palmetum"

whenever I went to church. It was splendid for the purpose of furnishing me with Latin words and enriching my vocabulary. Also, I made it a point to read from my Latin author from eighty to a hundred lines every night. In a word, a revolution had occurred in my life. I was now actually studying to learn and not simply to get by.

Mr. Poland, my excellent teacher, knew nothing of my new plan of work. It happened in about five or six weeks after my new plan of studies had been inaugurated that he gave us a test—we called such tests “competitions”—in Latin. This “competition,” according to the custom of that day, was to count double.

Mr. Poland was an original teacher. He often did the unexpected.

“Now boys,” he said, “today I am going to try you out on your knowledge of Latin. I am going to put on the board an extract from a Latin author. It is not in your course of studies.”

When Mr. Poland had written a few paragraphs of Latin on the board, the class, with one exception, looked extremely blank. That one exception looked extremely serene, and that one exception was myself. It is true I had never seen that particular bit of Latin text before, but I had not read the “*Cœleste Palmetum*” every day and translated on my own account eighty to a hundred lines of a classical author for nothing. The “competition” was not difficult to me.

Now I had spent six years at St. Louis University and never by any chance had I received any

distinction of any sort for Latin. But that particular "competition" put me head and shoulders above every boy in the class. Mr. Poland was astonished and called me aside the next day to congratulate me. He told me he had no idea how proficient I was in Latin. I laughed and explained to him that for several weeks past I had been doing extra work. The result of it all was that at the end of the year I, who had never been mentioned for distinction in the class, received second premium, much to the amazement of my classmates. Another result was this; when I presented myself to the Reverend Father Provincial in June, he took out a Latin book and asked me to translate. I imagine that good Father O'Neill thought he was going to floor me. I was, it is true, a little confused. Nevertheless my performance evidently pleased Father O'Neill very much. He accepted me and told me that I could enter the Society as a Jesuit novice on the coming July tenth, a day selected by myself. I departed from his room a very happy boy.

Looking back on those days at St. Louis University, I find that there were several things which did much to preserve the great gift God had given me, my vocation. First of all there was my companionship with Daniel Lowry, who had already preceded me to the noviceship. He was a boy of the finest tastes and highest ideals. Secondly, there was my contact with the Jesuits themselves. I considered them a wonderful body of men. That was fifty years ago. Since that time I have met them north and south, east and west, and I am grateful

to God to say that I have never changed my opinion. Amongst them I have found great purity, extraordinary holiness, fraternal charity, in a word a spirit that stamps them as being true followers of Christ our Lord. Of course I have met amongst them a few cranks, but that is only to be expected.

There was one Jesuit in my first days at St. Louis University who had a special influence upon me. He was Father John Van Krevel. When everybody, from my father down, looked upon me as approximating an educated ass, he, with my mother, was my only standby. He said, "Wait. The boy will turn out well if he continues his studies."

Father Van Krevel used to talk to me. In the summertime he had me visit him every week. He was not with me long, for he was called away to his studies at Woodstock. But, and here is the point I wish to bring out, his influence had a tremendous hold on me. Many a time, in strong temptation, came the memory of him, and the thought that he hoped for much from me and prayed for me saved me from falling. That wonderful influence held me in check until my first year in the academic.

Then came a new influence.

On returning to St. Louis University with vocation gone and high ideals almost dissipated, Father Coppens took me in hand. He, too, was kind enough to interest himself in my spiritual welfare. He led me on to read some very good Catholic books; and it was, I now believe, the reading of these books that brought back my vocation with full

force. Finally there was one other great influence which saved me from myself, and that influence was the Sodality.

I made my First Communion during my first year at St. Louis University, and Father Driessen had the class in charge. He was very fervent in his instructions and he enkindled in my soul fires of piety which had never burned there before. Immediately after making my First Communion I joined the Sodality. Now, to join the Sodality in those days meant a good deal. The meetings were held every Sunday afternoon at about two-thirty. Attending the meetings meant to sacrifice the Sunday afternoon. Nevertheless, there is one thing of which I may boast—I never missed a meeting of the Sodality. I attended faithfully year after year. This regular attendance and the sacrifice it involved meant true devotion to the Mother of God. No boy with that devotion can go far astray. For the Catholic boy devotion to the Mother of God is the most important thing in his life.

In those days at St. Louis University I did many foolish things, said many foolish things, was often very disagreeable, neglected my studies outside of the English branches as far as I could safely do so; yet Sodality membership is the one important thing in all those years. It meant my vocation, and my vocation is the one thing that saved me from a life, as I now believe, far below mediocrity.

Not so long ago a clever writer, who admitted he had been a Catholic but now avows himself a heretic or a pagan, fell afoul of my books. He wished to

attack them because I had called my old friend Jim Tully "a pagan, naked and unashamed." In speaking thus of Mr. Tully I had also expressed a hope, which I still carry, that a period of grace and light would come for him and that he would return to the faith of his fathers.

The critic in question said that when he was a boy my books had been among his favorites and that, looking back, he felt sure they were the best boys' books he had read. Then he came to his strong objection. These stories of mine, he complained, taught boys to live lives of purity. It was a most amazing criticism; and it came, I doubt not, from a critic who had not yet attained middle life. Of course I did not answer the criticism; but if I had, I would have counseled the critic to see a first-class alienist. Many of the pagans of our day know very little of the physical dangers, apart from all moral questions, associated with the lives of those whose minds are ever filled with thoughts of sex.

At the age of seventeen I was given the privilege of joining the Society of Jesus. All the old ideals which had been inspired in me by my First Communion and the Sodality, by the friendship of Father Van Krevel and my admiration of the Jesuits, had returned in full force. I was by no means an angel. I was full of faults and defects. Nevertheless, I was in earnest; and these ideals went far to help me in facing the trials and mortifications which are associated with the religious life.

CHAPTER III

Happy Days as a Novice

MONDAY, July 10, 1877, I left home with a happy heart to consecrate my life to God in the Order of the Society of Jesus. With a happy heart, I say. I was entering into a new life; there was the mystery, the fascination, of venturing into the unknown. Of course there was much of the spiritual in it too. I did most earnestly desire to follow the higher life. Yet it must be admitted that the prospect of linking myself with older men whom I had known and loved and with young men who had gone to school with me and preceded me into the Society contributed much to my leaving home and surroundings with a gay heart. Three other young men of the university came with me—Michael Owens, Joseph Gillick, and a young fellow who left the novitiate shortly on account of ill health. I have never seen him since. Fathers Owens and Gillick died many years ago.

We were welcomed at the novitiate by the novice master, Father Isadore Boudreaux, one of the saintliest and most engaging men I have ever met. Also there were novices who had entered before us and who had been at school with us. We were very happy that day.

Then we were all put into what is called first probation—that is, for a few days we were to learn

what we had to do in order to become Jesuits, what we had to give up, what we had to aspire to. Furthermore, the novice master took us each aside and went into the story of our lives, endeavoring to find out our strong points and our weaknesses and thus learn how to develop us in one way and to safeguard us in other ways.

During these days we first got an idea of what *silence* meant. It was a new experience to all of us, and a hard one too, to go about from early morning until noon without talking to everybody we met. For one hour after dinner and for another hour after supper we each had the company of an older Jesuit novice, who was called our guardian angel. It was his duty to entertain us, to keep up our spirits, and to supplement the work of the novice master. The term of our probation was to end with our being vested in the cassock, after which we were to be introduced to the older novices and assigned our desks in the ascetery, a large room in which all the novices performed together their exercises of prayer, study, reading and meditation.

I still remember vividly the day of my investiture. To me the cassock was a curious thing. It is true that in my earlier days at the university I had undertaken to be an acolyte, but I had not made a success of it. Assigned, when I was a boy of about thirteen, to serve Mass in the presence of the other students, I had made all manner of blunders. I was very sensitive at that time, and when I overheard someone make fun of my efforts as an altar boy, that

settled me. Never again could I be persuaded to assist the priest at the altar.

When the novice cassock was put upon me, I found it an awkward thing to manage. I nearly broke my neck going up the stairs on the way to the novices' ascetery. I was then and there, if I remember aright, instructed by the novice master to raise my cassock in front as I ascended the steps. It took me a long time to learn the lesson perfectly.

On entering the ascetery, each of us new novices went around among our older brothers, learned their names and saluted them in true brotherly fashion. It was a joyous occasion. Father Lowry, then one of the older novices, had spoken a great deal about me. Furthermore I was known as the sheriff's son and was for a time quite a celebrity.

During the introduction and in the friendly general conversation which followed, I was constantly diving into my pockets, only to remember that I no longer carried cigarette paper and tobacco. With the putting on of the cassock the cigarette was cast away. After about four years of cigarette smoking, the deprivation of it was really a hardship.

There was another little thing which I really felt. Since the age of twelve I had played the violin. Although I had not taken lessons for more than a year, I had come to have a great love for the instrument. The three teachers who had taught me were all unanimous in stating that I had a real talent for music. Whether that was true or not, the fact remained that I had come to love the violin and always, after coming back from school, I took up

my instrument and played it for an hour or more, with great pleasure to myself and no apparent hardship to my family. It had not always been thus. When I began my lessons the notes were so excruciating that my father rigged up a room above the stable, where I could exercise to my heart's content without ruining the nerves of friends and neighbors.

Well, I had formed a habit of playing the violin. To play it I needed ordinarily no music. What I had once played carefully I knew by heart without consulting a music sheet of any sort. If I may be permitted the liberty of a digression, I often ask myself how it was that, having so extraordinary a memory for music, I had so a poor a one for language. One of the daily exercises of the noviceship was a memory lesson. The manuductor (the novice placed over all of us) would assign ten or twelve lines, generally from some Latin text, and we would spend fifteen or twenty minutes memorizing them. Most of the novices, in fact all of them, so far as I knew, had no difficulty in repeating the lines immediately after the assigned period. I did have difficulty. In fact I do not think that I ever made a success of my memory lesson. It was so when I was a boy at the university. It has been so all my life. But music! Go over a composition once or twice carefully, and I had no need to consult a printed copy.

So, then, at the beginning of my novitiate, I found that I was more or less the victim of two habits, the cigarette and the violin. For a month or more I seriously felt the deprivation of these two things.

As to smoking, after four or five months, by order of the doctor, I was allowed to resume the old habit. As to the violin, now and then I was allowed to use it in accompanying the choir at great celebrations. What a joy it was to me to take it up again. However—a thing of psychological interest—the two years of the noviceship broke me completely of the violin habit. Many and many a time in the years that followed, I used that instrument, but only when my work or my duty called upon me to do so. The love of it was gone and never returned.

The routine of the novitiate was a difficult one. We arose in those days at four-thirty and we retired at nine-thirty. Between the hours of arising and going to bed there was a regular order. Every hour of the day was assigned to some fixed study or task. From five to six we had our meditation, followed by Mass, after which we went up to our dormitory and each of us made his own bed. I had no gift of making beds. Nor did I ever learn. There was breakfast at a quarter past seven. Presently there came one hour for what was called manualia. We lined up before the manuductor, who, in the Latin tongue, assigned us our different tasks. One day it might be the peeling of potatoes. Another day it might be sweeping. Another day we might be sent to the garden, where Brother Tracey, a nervous and active man who was completely deaf, put us to work at wheeling sods or weeding or other such work.

I was seldom sent to the garden to help Brother

Tracey after a certain event. One day, early in my novitiate experience, I was sent to him and he brought me to a bed of flowers. He told me to weed the bed. I did so. To my mind it was a perfect job. The day had not gone far, when he came in great excitement to the manuductor. He said:

“Do you know that sheriff’s son?”

The manuductor nodded his head.

“Can he sweep? Can he peel potatoes?”

To both questions the manuductor nodded in assent.

“Well,” continued Brother Tracey, “let that sheriff’s son sweep all he likes and let him peel potatoes and let him work in the refectory, but don’t send him to my garden any more! I told him to dig the weeds out of the bank of flowers and he took all the flowers out too.”

The story became common property and I did not go to the garden for many and many a month.

Following this hour of manualia there was some study in Latin, and following it there were twenty-five or forty minutes of spiritual reading. Then came examination of conscience, followed by dinner.

Now, my dear reader, consider this: From the moment we got up in the morning at four-thirty until after dinner we did no talking of any sort. It was silence, silence, silence. In the first days of the noviceship I found it rather hard.

The hour following dinner was spent in recreation. For an hour we would talk and joke and laugh. The Jesuit novice is the most cheerful crea-



"He told me to weed the bed"

ture in the world. Give him the least provocation and he bursts with laughter.

My first experiences with the novices were most edifying. I had thought they were all saints, fit to go to heaven on sight, and no questions asked. But one day I found out that they were quite human. It was a recreation afternoon and we all went out to the novice diamond and played baseball. There I discovered in many of them traces of the old Adam. Give me an American boy who knows his baseball and becomes a novice; let this American-boy novice go out and play baseball; if he keeps his temper and continues to act as a novice in regular training, he has already achieved high sanctity.

Promptly at the beginning of our novitiate we were all set to work to train ourselves religiously. We were all instructed in the particular and the general examinations of conscience, and were assigned, for the first subject of our particular examination, modesty of the eyes. It was explained to us that a Religious ought to have control over all his senses and that he should not go about rolling his eyes from side to side and turning his head to see this or that. I entered upon this exercise of self-restraint with much zeal and went around bumping into people and making a goose of myself with a fervor evidently well intended but no less evidently injudicious.

All of us new novices were very much in earnest. The novice master had the gift of inspiring us with the desire to make sacrifices. So it was that the hardships of the day, beginning with early rising

and ending with early retiring, soon became as nothing. We were working to fashion ourselves upon the model of Christ the Lord.

In January came the "long retreat"—thirty days of silence, prayer, meditation and solitude. We were all, under the guidance of our saintly novice master, endeavoring to meditate so upon the life and doctrine of Christ as to know Him more intimately and follow Him more closely. I think that to me, as to all the novices engaged in these wonderful spiritual exercises, there came an experience similar to that of the three apostles who accompanied Our Lord up to Mount Tabor. Like the three apostles, we had known Our Lord, in a way, all our lives; and like the apostles, having labored up the mountain of meditation, we saw Our Lord with other, larger, eyes. In the Gospel record we read that Our Lord was transfigured; His face shone as the sun. The three apostles saw Him in all splendor. They had not seen Him thus before because He, by His own power, concealed from them the vision of His true glory. In that long retreat we too saw Our Lord in a new and more intimate way. It was the Vision Splendid.

No wonder that ardent young men who have made this retreat have afterwards done heroic things, lived lives of incredible zeal and of heroic sanctity. From the long retreat of their novice days they retained forever after the vivid memory of the Vision Splendid. I can imagine nothing better calculated to make men close followers of Christ and by consequence true heroes of the cross, saintly

missionaries, heroic martyrs, than the performance of the thirty days' exercises as laid down by St. Ignatius.

These exercises are in a way rather difficult. Solitude and silence and meditation are something of a strain on the natural man. The novice master watched us all carefully. He did what he could to see that we had plenty of exercise and sleep and that we were well fed. But despite all these precautions one or another of the novices would break down. Such, alas, was my fate. During the retreat I was in what is generally known as my first fervor. I was hard on myself, and, being by no means a man of solid virtue, a little apt to be hard on everybody else. This is the lowest form of progress in the spiritual life. Also, a number of ailments were beginning to annoy me.

After the retreat I was sent to St. Louis to see my doctor. He gave me a tonic to build me up, but I did not build very well. Nevertheless I continued my novice life and was very happy. But as the months went on, it was one ailment after another. I was never well. My novice master was much concerned about the state of my health and did everything, according to his lights, to bring about an improvement. But the improvement failed to come. Day after day I continued to go down.

One day Father Boudreux called me to his room. He went into the state of my health very carefully and then made the following proposition. With the Father Provincial's consent, I was to be allowed to go home for a few months, remaining a novice, and

under my own doctor's care put myself in shape to return to the novitiate, and at the end of the two years make my vows with my brother novices. Anything that seemed good to my novice master seemed good to me. I willingly assented.

So Father Boudreaux went to St. Louis and consulted with the provincial. The next day he summoned me again. There was sorrow in his face. I knew that something had gone wrong. In the kindest manner he informed me that the provincial despaired of my health. He was of the opinion that the life of the Society was not for me, that I could not stand it. Father Boudreaux did not express his own opinion, but I inferred he had been anxious to retain me. Neither did I agree with the provincial.

Over fifty years have passed since that day, and I am now free to state that in the light of after events I am convinced that the provincial was absolutely right. Humanly speaking, I was not fit for the life of the Society. Humanly speaking, I say. God often chooses instruments in themselves most unfit to do His work.

I agreed to act on the decision of the provincial, and his decision was that I should return home absolutely free and in no way connected with the Society of Jesus. Here, however, I put in a word on my own account.

"Suppose I should recover," I said; "shall I be taken back?"

The novice master assured me that in case of recovery I would be most welcome to return to my

novice home. So, early in October, thirteen months after my first entrance into the Society, I returned to St. Louis. When I had bidden my brother Jesuits good-bye and entered the carriage which was to convey me to the station, my eyes were filled with tears. It was one of the saddest days of my life.

CHAPTER IV

Five Months' Banishment

WHAT most deeply impressed me on my return to the world were the faces of the people. How sad they were, how preoccupied, how careworn in contrast with the faces of the novices with whom I had lived for thirteen months! In leaving the novitiate I had left a world where prevailed the peace of God which passeth understanding.

The first thing I did on returning to St. Louis was to visit my family's doctor, Jerome K. Bauduy. I had always regarded him as a great physician. He gave me a thorough examination, insisted that the provincial had made a mistake, and was minded to call him up at once and show him the error of his ways. But my aunt and my mother, who were with me, thought it might be better to temporize. They were of the opinion that the proper time to interrogate the superior was when I had recovered my strength and health. Dr. Bauduy held that there was nothing serious the matter with me and that with plenty of fresh air and exercise and sunlight and good food I would soon be myself again. As the event proved, he was right.

The next thing which I did was to join the Saint Louis Gymnasium. Once more I availed myself of the turning pole and of the parallel bars. In addi-

tion an instructor at the gymnasium gave me drills in the use of the dumbbells and Indian clubs. To the gymnasium I reported every day. Also, my father, still sheriff of the county, gave me a position in his office which involved much walking about the streets of the city and, incidentally, kept me well provided with pocket money. A decided change for the better in my health came about so quickly as to be almost unbelievable. My muscles began to develop, and in a few weeks I learned certain tricks on the parallel bars which afterwards, in my St. Mary's prefecting days, aroused admiration, but seldom imitation. In a word, I grew very strong and hardy in an inconceivably short time.

On January 1, if I remember aright, the Rev. Edward A. Higgins was made provincial of the Missouri province. Shortly after that day I visited him at St. Louis University. He was extremely kind and affable. I laid before him my whole case, my ailments, the opinion of the former provincial, my doctor's opinion and my present state of health, and asked for readmittance. He made no objection and asked me to name the day. I told him that, so far as I felt personally, I would be glad to re-enter at once, but that the doctor wished me to take a trip for a month or so in the South.

Father Higgins approved of this and showed an unusual interest. It came out, then, that one of the novices for whom I had the highest regard, Mr. Edward O'Sullivan, had also had a breakdown. Father Higgins had it in mind to send him to some salubrious spot which would restore his health. The

young novice had developed a clear case of consumption. Father Higgins had discovered that in Seguin, Texas, there was a small Jesuit house occupied by a few members of the Mexican province. He had been informed that the climate was all that could be desired for people with weak lungs, and he proposed that I should travel south with Mr. O'Sullivan.

The proposition gave me a thrill. Nothing could have suited me better. And so in due time Mr. O'Sullivan and I took a train for the great South. He was a very sick man going down, and the feeling came upon me that he would never return. Looking back, I remember our passing through Indian Territory. What has become of Indian Territory? Where are the snows of yesteryear?

The community at Seguin was made up of five or six Jesuits, all of them foreigners. The superior was an Italian, his subjects Italians and Spaniards. At recreation Mr. O'Sullivan and I were amazed at the way they carried on. There seemed to be nothing unimportant in what they said. Everything was tremendous. They would become excited about any subject. One good old Spanish Father would speak in such a manner as to rock the whole room. I afterwards learned that he was suffering from a double rupture and I could easily understand how he got it.

They and we were in different worlds. There were few points of contact between us. For instance, I had brought south with me for our mutual delectation some of Dickens's novels. The superior

said nothing about the matter at first, but subsequently he informed me that people who read such books would infallibly lose their vocation to the Society. Today, at an advanced age, I am able to understand his standpoint. In expressing this opinion he was not thinking of Dickens; he was thinking of *novels*. In his own country at that time the novel was a species of literature not intended for the eyes of youth and modesty.

I had hardly arrived in Seguin when I was invested with the cassock and biretta and commissioned to preach in the church every week. I was about to say that I became the orator of Seguin, but that would hardly be fair. I have never considered myself an orator. But I was able to get up and give the good people attending our parish a simple and, I trust, a profitable little talk.

Mr. O'Sullivan and I consorted much together during the day and reveled in the sunshine and balmy air. How quickly he recovered! In a few days he was a new man; and when, at the end of a month, I departed for St. Louis, he was convalescent.

I came near becoming a very important member of that community. The superior belonged to the Mexican province, which at that time boasted only seventeen men. Not one of them dared show his face in Mexico. Poor old Mexico! Matters were in a very sad state in that unfortunate country.

The superior conceived the idea of revivifying the Mexican province. He was of a mind to start a novitiate at Seguin, Texas, and he wanted to hold

me there as the novice to start things going. He thought that by admirable example I might be able to lead up the high path of perfection the other novices who should enter. It never occurred to me that I couldn't do the thing. I was quite willing to embrace the proposal and wrote to Father Higgins asking his permission. Father Higgins at once answered my letter and told me that he did not approve of the idea at all. Looking back with wiser eyes, I am convinced that beyond the shadow of a doubt Father Higgins was absolutely right.

Well, I returned in due time to St. Louis, stronger and in better health than I had ever been before or ever have been since. I was then by way of becoming a really good athlete. I had agreed with Father Higgins to reënter the Society on March 24, 1879. So on that day I returned to Florissant and rejoined my brother novices, who during those five months had been carrying on according to the training of the Society.

CHAPTER V

My Second Entrance

MY RETURN to the novitiate was something quite different from my first entrance. There was no sense of novelty, no wide-eyed wonder at the things that were to come, no first fervor. It was, if I may use the expression, a strictly business proposition. I realized that God called me to the Society; I realized that I ought to enter it.

Of course something of the human element attracted me. It was delightful to rejoin my brother novices, young men whom I had known and loved. If there is anything in the world more edifying than a body of Jesuit novices, I have not seen it. They are all so eager, so devoted, so wholehearted, so sincere, so gay. While it is true that they have not, for the most part, attained solid virtue, it is also true that they are literally scrambling up the road to perfection. It is not a question of sauntering along or walking briskly—the novice scrambles.

A novice in what is called his first fervor is a wonderful creature. He has enthusiasm, one hundred per cent., energy in the same high ratio, and judgment hardly above ten per cent. That is why he needs a novice master; that is why he should open his heart to that spiritual guide. He needs direction, failing which, all his fervor will go for nothing, or possibly spell disaster.

In my first noviceship I had been in the state of first fervor most of the time. While not prepared to state that my zeal was one hundred per cent., I am certain that my judgment was hardly ten per cent. I was a goose. Luckily, I was in close touch with the novice master.

I remember that one time I was assailed, not by a temptation, but by a desire to smoke. I awoke in the morning with that desire. It accompanied me in my meditation, saw me through my breakfast, was with me during the exercises of manualia, took my mind off the spiritual reading I made. Literally I was haunted by it. This thing went on for three days. Then I went to good Father Boudreaux and exposed to him my obsession.

“Carissime,” he said, using the official novice title, “when the devil sees it is to no purpose to assail a man with the greater temptations, he frequently tries to catch him by means of some weakness. And frequently, as soon as the devil sees that his snare is detected, he gives up.”

I bowed myself out; the devil gave up. The novice master was right.

During my period of first fervor I could not for the life of me see why everybody didn’t measure things from my point of view. I was like a man who when he takes a pinch of snuff thinks that everybody in the vicinity should sneeze. Hence, while severe with myself, I was severe with everybody else. In very truth I cannot but think that I must have been a very disagreeable young novice.

On my return I was in many respects changed.

No doubt I had my visitations of fervor; but it was no longer first fervor. I looked with a kindlier eye on those around me. I began to understand that the best of us look at certain matters from different viewpoints and see the same thing in a somewhat different light. In fact the master himself felicitated me on the change. He told me that in my first period of noviceship I was by way of making virtue repulsive, but that since my return I had become more human and had exercised a much greater power for good.

The months of April, May, June and July passed quickly and happily. On July 31, the feast of St. Ignatius, founder of the Society, my brother novices who had entered with me took their first vows; and as they pronounced them, I felt like a peri at the gates of Eden, looking in but not permitted to enter.

On August 15, the feast of the Assumption, another group of novices, my dear companions, made their first vows, and I was more than ever a disconsolate peri. These brethren of mine, when they had taken their vows, went at once from the novitiate to the juniorate. They were called juniors, and their business for the next two years would be to devote themselves to an intensive study of Latin, Greek, and English, with a view to preparing themselves to be teachers of classes.

As for myself, on August 15 I felt like the last rose of summer left blooming alone. However, on August 25 Father Boudreax called me and told me to rejoin my companions and become what was then known as a skullcap junior,—that is to say, a novice

wearing, as was the custom in those days, a skull cap instead of the biretta which the juniors, from the time they had made their vows, were entitled to wear.

The first year of the juniorate was quite agreeable. My studies were not unpleasant. In fact I took a delight in cultivating my English. It is but just to remark that I did not shine. Although I had some sort of reputation as a writer, my written exercises did little to sustain me. In fact I seldom took the themes assigned seriously. During the whole time which I spent in the juniorate, one year and a half, I wrote my one bit of verse that was worth keeping, and the subject of that verse was suggested to me by my professor.

There arose, also, another difficulty. My health began once more to fail. It failed perceptibly more when, in the month of June, I was once more taken over to the novice side to make the long retreat, the thirty days' retreat I had made before. Although I had been released from most of the trials and training proper to the novitiate, it was held by superiors that the long retreat had to be made once more. When at its conclusion I returned to the juniorate, I was a better man, no doubt, but rather worn out for the work of study.

With the December vacation came an improvement in health, so that when I entered into the second year of the juniorate under Father Calmer I was able to renew my studies with ardor.

Father Calmer was an inspiring teacher. He had a gift of arousing enthusiasm. Strangely

enough, I did not at that time like him. I make this statement not as an indictment of him but of myself. I fancy myself as being at that time a difficult and disagreeable, dyspeptic young man. The fact of the matter is that after the first few weeks under Father Calmer I went into dyspepsia, the most disagreeable manifestation of it being an almost constant headache. As a consequence I had to give up the study of Greek, and I did just enough in the other branches to avoid failure.

As the weeks went on, my health grew worse. Early in January I had a severe fall which brought about further complications. Finally I was sent to St. Louis to see my doctor. He found out what was the matter with me and then wrote a letter to my provincial, Father Higgins, stating that it was imperatively necessary, in order to safeguard my health, that I should be taken from the juniorate and put into more active work.

Now, as I write, there comes back a memory which makes me smile. During the days of our noviceship we novices each had a copy of a special text book called the "Diarium," and written especially for novices. In one special part it called upon each one of us to ask himself what place, of all the places to which he might possibly be sent, he dreaded most; and secondly, what special work that might be assigned him was in his eyes the most disagreeable. Many a time in my noviceship I had examined myself on those two points, and the answer had always been the same. I dreaded St. Mary's, Kansas, most of all; and the most repug-

nant position I could imagine was being prefect in a boarding school.

But the "Diarium" did not stop with these two probing questions. It went on to say that, having answered them, we should then pray earnestly to God that we be sent to the place we most dreaded and assigned the task most abhorrent to our nature. My prayer was heard. I was sent to St. Mary's, Kansas, and subsequently acted as prefect there for two years.

When I reached St. Mary's I was in very poor condition. Dyspepsia and other ailments had interfered seriously with my studies during the preceding six months. Possibly that is the reason why I was given a room to myself at the college. There were seven other scholastics there at the time, but none of them had a room to himself. They were in the dormitories at night with the boys, and during the day they had at their disposition one big room which they shared in common. I considered it a great privilege to have a room to myself, as indeed, in the old days at St. Mary's, it certainly was. Also, I considered myself very rich in my equipment. I had brought with me a fine copy of Bryant's Household Book of Poetry, a present from my mother when I left St. Louis. In those days poetry meant much to me. I remember that during recreation in the juniorate I almost invariably lost my temper in standing up for my literary opinions. Of course my dyspepsia had something to do with that. I struggled manfully to keep cool. In fact, before recreation I always prayed earnestly that I might

keep my temper. In fact I must sadly consider that at that time of my life, a junior, in poor health and dyspepsia-ridden, I must have been a very disagreeable young man.

During my year and a half in the juniorate it had been one of my pleasant duties to get up plays to be given on certain important feast days for the entertainment of the community. I was quite successful, writing the plays myself and directing the whole affair. Also, I had some talent for verse, and as we were all one little family, any clever remark concerning one or the other member of the community was sure to make a hit. The plays I wrote were not strikingly original. For instance, one of them was a crude rendition of "Oliver Twist." Another was an Indian play which, as a small boy, I had seen troupers, directed by John D. Owens, produce at St. Louis. A third play was, I believe, original.

In any event, the production of these plays gave me the reputation of being a literary fellow. One day a group of novices had discussed with the enthusiasm of youth what we should like to do when we had finished our Jesuit training. I have no recollection of the details, but I recall that I shocked everybody present by stating it was my ambition to be a writer of books. They thought, and with perfect justice, that I was a very conceited young man.

In connection with these plays I recall with shame that I was very intolerant of criticism even from those who were my superiors in years, in training,

and in culture. So, if the reader pictures me on my way to St. Mary's, Kansas, as a somewhat ill-tempered and conceited young man, I fancy that he has made no mistake.

I had gone to St. Mary's for the benefit of my health. However, that did not mean a rest. Quite the contrary. I was almost at once ushered into a classroom of which I was in charge from eight o'clock in the morning until noon, and from one-thirty o'clock in the afternoon until four. Also, at twelve o'clock I read in the refectory while the community were seated at dinner, and hurriedly took my own meal afterwards so as to be in time for the afternoon session of my class.

Now on the face of it that does not look like a particularly good health program. But it was. In a few weeks I had forgotten all about my dyspepsia. In a few weeks I became hale and hearty. In a word, I was cured. The work was hard, but there was no worry.

CHAPTER VI

First Experiences in the Classroom

I HAD arrived at St. Mary's early in February. The first impressions were far from favorable. There was inadequate housing; the yards were in fearful condition, with the result that all the stairways and corridors in our residence were plastered with mud. The playgrounds were filled with pools of water and nearly all the boys navigated in rubber boots.

Father Van der Eerden, rector of the college, Father Charles Coppens, prefect of studies, and Father Tehan, prefect of discipline, greeted me with open arms; they were glad to get me. They wanted a man to take the preparatory class in hand. That class of about forty-eight boys had been at a loose end from the beginning of the year to the time of my arrival.

In fact, though I did not know it, Brother George Bender, a very successful teacher who had conducted classes in the state of Kansas for over six years, had written the provincial to say that it would be impossible for him to continue teaching the preparatory class unless he had permission to use the strap. Three teachers had already essayed the task of handling the young gentlemen of this class; and three teachers had given up in despair.

To this class I was assigned.

No man was more auspiciously inducted into the charge of a classroom than I. Father Coppens introduced me. The preparatory class was in a small building separate from the other edifices of the college. A part of this building was used for an infirmary and the rest of it, one large room, was roughly fitted out for class work. It was indeed little better than a stable.

Father Coppens and I entered together. It was an impressive moment for me. Not so, I dare say, for the boys. They were accustomed to the advent of new teachers, and as like as not, some were already figuring on how long I would last.

Father Coppens made a stirring speech. He spoke in no uncertain terms of the bad record of the class, and he made dire threats as to what would be done if there was further trouble. Father Coppens had hardly left the room when in came that genial and lovable soul Father Tehan. His speech was much stronger than that of his predecessor.

"And, Mr. Finn," he concluded, addressing me, "if any boy in this class gives you the least trouble, send him to me." His eyes were flashing. "Send him to me, and I'll fix him."

I began to feel as lordly as a plumber. But the end was not yet. Presently Father Van der Eerden, the rector, entered the room. He told the assembled boys, without mincing words, that up to that date they had given more trouble than the rest of the student body put together. He declared that the end had come; that they had to begin new lives

or they would be packed out of the place and sent with their trunks to their homes.

All this impressed me very much; but I had no reason to think that it had much effect on the boys. They had heard these things before.

So, once the introductory speeches were over, there I stood before this anomalous class. Anomalous is the word. They were of all ages, from ten to eighteen. One of them, by the way, did not return to school the following year. He stayed home to marry. There were halfbreeds, Mexicans, and a good number of American boys whose early education had been sadly neglected; and I stood there before them without a strap. In the Jesuit schools corporal punishment was, very rightly, in the hands of the prefect of discipline. However, I was not worrying about corporal punishment; I had other plans.

While at the novitiate I had arranged a play for some home entertainment. The play was a dramatization of "Oliver Twist." I knew the story well.

Here was my opening address. I told the boys that I would take it for granted that every one of them was all right, all that he should be. "Now," I continued, "I shall tell you what I am going to do. This is our first day together. If you behave decently during our class hours today, I am going to tell you a story during the last half-hour of class."

It is well for the reader to know that classes in those days and in that particular department began at eight in the morning, adjourned at noon, reopened at one-thirty and closed at four.

My announcement excited the first sign of enthusiasm I had thus far seen in that motley assembly. They *did* behave that day, and at three-thirty I began the story of Oliver Twist. How those boys did listen! The men and women of this moving-picture age can hardly imagine the enthusiasm of those boys. Indeed, had the motion picture been invented, this chapter of my life and many more that follow from it, would never have been written.

On the next day the program was the same, and on the next, and on the next.

To my great surprise, in those early days, I discovered that I was teaching a class ninety-five per cent. of whom were skilled liars. When a boy answered a question without hesitation, I felt almost certain that he was lying. If he stopped and fumbled at the answer, I felt that he was making a struggle to tell the truth. Springtime began before the class became normal boys in the matter of veracity.

Well, a week went by, and then there returned to the room an absent member. He had been spending a week in the infirmary, nursing a badly bruised head, which he had come by honestly and richly deserved. Someone, possibly by divine inspiration, had banged his head against a board fence, interrupting for the nonce the young gentleman's pernicious activity. Well, there he was again in his accustomed seat. Looking about him, he surveyed his classmates. What had happened to them? They were acting like gentlemen. Young Miller—that is

not his name—elected to stand by the old order. He became troublesome.

“Miller,” I said, “behave yourself, or I shall have to take serious measures.”

Miller must have wondered what was the matter with me. He paid no attention to my warning. Once more, after his wonder had subsided, he began to talk and manifest other slight symptoms of disorder. Then the bomb burst.

“Miller,” I said, “I am extremely sorry for the class. They are all behaving like gentlemen, except yourself; but you have ruined the good order here, and therefore there will be no story this afternoon.”

If Miller had thought that he was by way of being a hero in that classroom, his eyes were quickly opened. Every boy present turned and glared at him. They fixed him with hostile eyes. He must have felt like the Ancient Mariner after shooting the albatross.

Recess followed shortly upon this announcement, during which time, as I afterwards learned, the indignant class brought the young rebel to the big water pump and gave him a ducking which he was not likely to forget. This baptism produced a regeneration in young Miller which left him, for the rest of that year, a decently conducted youth.

One lesson of value to me for the rest of my life I learned while in charge of this preparatory class. And that lesson was never to shift the burden of my responsibility upon anyone else.

One day a boy gave me some trouble. The thing did not amount to much, but I had in mind Father

Tehan's request that I send to him any boy giving trouble. I had done it several times before. The boy came back presently, announcing pertly that Father Tehan was not in. His manner in making this announcement aroused me.

"Very well," I said, "I will take care of you myself."

The boy grew pale as a ghost.

"Oh, please," he said, "please send me to Father Tehan."

I had learned a great lesson, and from that day to this I have never sent a boy to a higher authority unless I knew that the nature of his case put him out of my jurisdiction.

One last thought. How history does repeat itself! In leading those boys successfully on through the second term of the school year, I had unwittingly followed the plot of the Arabian Nights.

CHAPTER VII

The Rocky Road

WHILE my first attempt at teaching at St. Mary's College was really successful, even then I began to suspect that I was not as yet fully equipped for dealing with the American boy. It was true I was perfectly at home with the small boy, but with his larger brother the case was different. I did not feel completely at ease with the young man; and what is worse, I showed it in my manner.

One day shortly after my arrival at St. Mary's I was called upon to act as prefect in the yard. I went to my appointed duty with perfect obedience, but with the secret longing that it were supper time and all were well.

It was a bitter day in midwinter. The yard abounded in snow. It was my duty to see that the throwing of snowballs and kindred amusements were conducted within well-set limits. As I looked around the yard, my heart sank, and I expected trouble. We generally get what we expect, and for two or three hours I had pecks of trouble. I thought that some of the boys were insolent. Possibly they were; probably they were not. I had not acquired the art of speaking to them as a prefect to his subordinates. I was not sure of my authority, and the boys, sensing the situation, were not sure of it either.

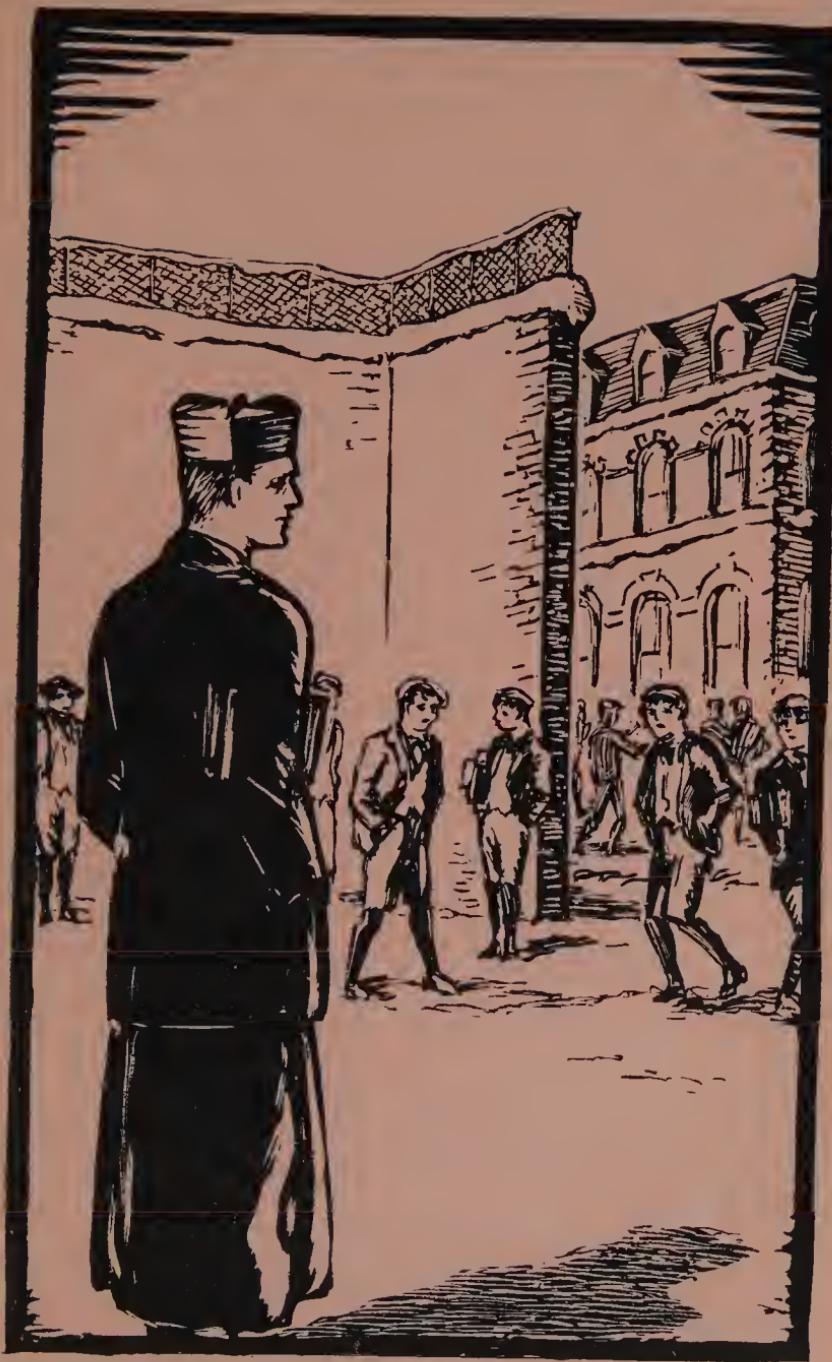
My first day of prefecting was a flat failure. However, I had plenty of time to study the situation to see wherein I had failed and to make suitable resolutions for future contingencies. For the rest of the year I was not called upon to do prefecting of any sort.

The summer came, and with it many changes in the staff of St. Mary's College. Most important of all, Father Van der Eerden, rector of the college, was succeeded by Father Charles Coppens, who had been my spiritual father and spiritual director when I attended St. Louis University. Father Coppens had formed a high idea of my excellences. He thought I was just the man to take charge of the school discipline and appointed me head prefect of the college. Before he got through with me—a period of two years—I have no doubt that he was disappointed. In fact I am sure of it.

The year which saw me in charge of the college discipline was one of the most important in the history of St. Mary's College. It was a crucial year. Many circumstances conspired to bring about this state of things.

First of all, there were a new rector and a new staff of professors. The former prefects were sent to other fields. The traditions of the college were in danger of being lost. These traditions were, none of them, venerable. They were not well founded, and indeed some of the most important of them were to be upset, as we shall presently see.

Again, the number attending the college was greatly increased at the opening of the year by the



"I was called upon to act as prefect in the yard"

accession of a large class of boys who had been attending a boarding school in another part of the country. Many of these boys brought with them habits and customs which did not promise to make for the good of St. Mary's. Finally, there came back to St. Mary's three or four boys who had formerly attended the school, but who had left by request; and with them came companions of theirs of the same ilk. There were many other newcomers belonging to neither of these sets—boys from St. Louis, Cincinnati and other cities, of a very fine type.

The first week of school had not passed when I saw that the college was confronted with a serious situation. Two distinct groups of boys had already formed. The first group was made up of good boys—respectable, self-respecting and promising in every way. The second group was composed of a rougher element. They had returned from the previous year and were headed by three or four young gentlemen who, having previously left by request, had now returned in the hope of getting by under a new regime.

All these things were brought home to me partly by my dealings with the boys and partly by the information given me by a scholastic who had been prefect the previous year. He told me that unless something were done to check the return of such boys, incalculable harm would be done.

Armed with all this information, I had put the matter before Father Coppens. The new president was a saint, a man of solid virtue. Also he was an

optimist. He listened to me with perfect patience and with sympathy. But he stood up for the objectionable boys. His argument was this: These boys are returning under a new regime; they will get another chance. Who knows but that they may turn out, under our new discipline, to be good boys? My answer was that St. Mary's was not a reform school; and so, with mutual expressions of esteem and confidence, we parted.

As the weeks went on, I perceived, with a sinking heart, that the morale of the school was suffering. The "gang" was gaining ascendancy day after day. It is true that several changes of an important character had been made to safeguard the better class of boys. The conduct card given every month, now meant much. Those who received conduct cards were entitled to many privileges. The most important of all was the privilege of going out walking unattended by a prefect on Sundays and holidays. This was something new in the history of St. Mary's, for up to that year the boys were not allowed to leave the college yard unless attended by one or more prefects.

From this point of view the better class of boys were well off, but they were the object of the hate and derision of the "gang." The outlook, so far as I was concerned, became gloomier each day. I trembled for the future of St. Mary's.

Once more, then, I went to see Father Rector. I put before him the situation, pointing out that there were fifteen or twenty boys at least who should not be at St. Mary's, that so long as they

were in attendance they would exercise a damaging influence on the entire school, and that unless something drastic were done the college was in danger of suffering mortal hurt. So the case seemed to me. Father Coppens, gentle, considerate and kind, could not see the situation in that light at all. His desire was to be patient and long-suffering and to trust to Providence to bring the boys in question to a better state of mind.

I was a very young man at that time, but I took a very bold stand; and I did it knowing that I was acting within my rights.

I said: "Father Rector, I feel compelled to tell you that I cannot see the matter in the same light as you see it. I feel bound in conscience to tell you that I must appeal the case. I intend to put the matter before the Reverend Father Provincial."

A bold thing, this, from a youngster who was a nobody to an old and distinguished Jesuit, but the meek and humble Father Coppens did not look on it in that light. Smiling, he said calmly, "That is all right, Mr. Finn. You have a perfect right to speak to Father Provincial about it, and I haven't the least objection in the world."

Father Higgins was at that time provincial of the Missouri province. I wrote him at once, putting before him, as I saw it, the whole situation. For reply he came out to St. Mary's shortly afterwards, summoned me to his room and questioned me at length. Father Higgins was a man of keen intellect; he had a gift for probing. He searched my soul with questions, and when the conference

was over, I felt that he understood perfectly my side of the story. No doubt he got Father Rector's side, too, and no doubt he got it thoroughly. He left us almost immediately, and he was hardly out of the house when Father Rector summoned me to his room.

"Mr. Finn," said Father Rector, "have you a list of the boys you think are dangerous to the discipline and morality of the school?"

On my answering that I had, he said:

"Very well, give me that list."

I did.

"Now," he continued, "I want you to keep these boys in mind, and as soon as you get a single case against any one of them, out he goes."

Evidently, in my difference with Father Rector, I had won. Nevertheless I had been defeated, for his sweetness, his gentleness and his patience made me feel very small indeed. Although I had differed with him, and carried my difference to higher authority and had won out, Father Coppens remained as kind and as friendly as though I had agreed with him in everything. He was a man of real virtue.

I was not slow to avail myself of the rector's suggestion. The ranks of the "gang" began to thin rapidly. Terror came upon them. During the months of November and December I carried on with an efficiency worthy of the cause at stake, but I made one colossal blunder—I made known publicly that I was going to get rid of the undesirables.

By Christmas time the work was done. The ring-leaders, with one exception, were dismissed. But

these two months were the hardest of my life. It was a battle royal. The "gang" knew exactly what I was about, and they had their backs to the wall. They were at bay. They were conquered, it is true, but conquered by a man who showed little tact. I was young and inexperienced and, for my age, in a difficult position.

Of course there was no question of getting rid of the whole "gang." To have attempted such a thing would have been far worse than a display of poor tact. It would have been a grave error of judgment. Rarely, so far as I know, is it necessary to dismiss an entire crowd. Seek out the ring-leaders, get rid of them, and the remaining members of the "gang," deprived of leadership, become fit cases for reformation.

If my memory serves me right, there were not more than six or seven who really should have been weeded out, and weeded out they were.

In those days I was with the boys day and night. I arose before them in the morning, and I presided over them until all were in their beds and presumably fast asleep.

Seated beside my bed—just one of innumerable beds in a very large dormitory—I had a full view of nearly the whole dormitory. However, at the extreme end there were two small sections partitioned off, with beds for about twenty in each section. There was an assistant prefect to take charge of these two divisions. The best boys of the school were assigned to that part of the dormitory. However, mischief and goodness often go hand in hand,

and these boys, really good fellows, had opportunities for mischief denied to the great body of students who were directly under my eye.

While the boys were retiring, I sat beside my bed and read night after night the Greek Testament. I had very little time for reading in those days, and, I know not why, I was extremely particular in my choice of books. During the day, when I had a little leisure, my reading was mostly from two books, Tennyson's Poems and the *Confessions of St. Augustine*.

Very rarely did I have any real trouble in the dormitory. During my warfare with the "gang," I often came to the dormitory worn out and tempted to discouragement. I was doing an ungrateful work. Only twenty-two years of age at the time, I was in charge of young men many of whom were older than I. The weakness I discovered in myself during the previous year—a sort of inferiority complex in dealing with young men—was yet to be conquered. That year of prefecting was to do it, but the year that did it was a hard one.

With the breaking up of the autumnal weather and the coming of winter came my first real trouble in the dormitory.

One chilly night—about the middle of October, I fancy—the boys retired as usual, and several began to cough. This of course was quite natural. However, lending an attentive ear to the chorus, I recognized that some of the coughing was being overdone.

I became unusually attentive, and in a short time

I arrived at the conclusion that one particular boy was overdoing the thing. He was a newcomer and, without doubt, an undesirable boy. He had been brought to the yard a few days before and put into the hands of some of the best boys, and I had noticed that within the space of twenty-four hours he had picked out his own companions. As a rule one may judge a boy by the company he keeps. Of course I have seen notable exceptions, but I was satisfied that this boy, in the choice of companions, had found his own level; he belonged in the most undesirable set in the school.

The problem to me was how to stop his coughing. I could not punish him for coughing. He would protest that he had to cough, and there would be no way of establishing a case against him. So I adopted a ruse.

The next morning I took pains to see him.

“Bob,” I said, “you’ve got a pretty bad cold.”

He was on the defensive at once.

“Yes, sir,” he said. “I can’t help that coughing; I’ve got a bad cold.”

“I noticed it myself,” I returned. “Now, Bob, you’d better see the infirmarian today and get some medicine.”

And with that I left him.

Of course, I was certain he had no cold, and equally certain that he would not go to the infirmarian. And so it turned out to be.

That night, as the boys came up the stairs from the yard to the dormitory, I accosted Bob at the door of the dormitory.

"Wait here, Bob," I said. "I want to see you for a minute when the boys are in."

So Bob waited outside. The boys entered the dormitory, went to bed, and there came a great quiet. Then I stepped outside and addressed myself to Bob.

"Did you see the infirmarian?" I asked.

"N—no, sir," he said, somewhat abashed.

"That's too bad," I said. "You see, last night you kept a number of the boys awake by your coughing, and as you have taken no medicine and have assured me that you have a bad cold, I must let you wait outside here till the boys are asleep."

He looked combative.

"Now, this is not a punishment; you are making a sacrifice for the sake of the other boys. When they are asleep, I will call you in."

So I closed the door upon poor Bob and allowed him to stand out in the cold corridor for about one hour. When I allowed him to come in again, his cold was completely gone, and he retired to rest without disturbing a soul.

That was the end of the coughing spell. I had no dread of dormitory work, nor did I ever have any real trouble in presiding over the sleepers, except on one occasion to which I shall presently come.

I did a great deal of praying in the dormitory. It was a kind of prayer of which I had read, but of which, up to this time of my life, I had never had real experience. I may add that it was the kind of prayer to which I have rarely been driven since those months preceding the Christmas holidays of

that particular year. I was suffering from mental distress. I knew that I was facing an ordeal; and so, after the reading of a chapter or two of the Greek Testament, I would take out my Thomas à Kempis, open the book anywhere, and listen to the words of that all but inspired work of asceticism. The reading of a chapter from Thomas à Kempis always gave me strength. After that I frequently took up my crucifix and borrowed further strength from the passion and death of Our Divine Lord. In those days I was going through my Gethsemane.

As I said, I was with the boys from early morning until I went to bed at night towards ten o'clock. After I was asleep, anything could happen; I slept like a log.

Getting the boys up in the morning was an easy task; getting them out was simple; all had to repair to the washroom to make their matutinal toilet. At six o'clock I led the boys safely to the study hall for the saying of their morning prayers, and at six-thirty brought them to Mass. Here too the work was easy. After Mass I took them to breakfast. There were over two hundred boys eating in the same room—all eating as one. After their breakfast I left them in charge of the assistant prefect, and took my own breakfast, returning shortly to the yard and presiding there until eight o'clock, when the boys went to their studies. I too went to mine, preparing for the classroom work of the day.

I was in charge of a class called Second Grammar. It was a commercial class, no Latin or Greek

being taught in it. There were, I think, about forty boys in the classroom, two or three of them being ringleaders of the "gang." Many of the boys were older than I. It was the hardest class I have ever met. And yet the greater part of these boys were really fine fellows.

When I entered the classroom of a morning, I entered with that same wish, that it were supper time and all were well. I was afraid of the class. That was part of my inferiority complex. So long as I faced the boys, I had them in order; but once I turned my back, something was likely to happen. This condition of affairs continued for a long time, in fact until about the time of the Christmas holidays.

Beginning with the month of January, my grammar class became a model one, splendid behavior, earnest study, and success in mathematics and in English beyond my most sanguine expectations. The class I had dreaded in the early part of the year became a banner class. And the reason for the change was very simple: two leaders of the "gang" who had been in that class were dismissed, and that was the beginning of a new era.

The same could be said of the yard. Other members of the "gang" had been dismissed. There was only one leader left, and he was without supporters or friends. The worst was over. My inferiority complex was gone. I had fought to a victory, tactlessly, it is true, but efficiently. St. Mary's College was free of a gang which had promised to

upset the beautiful traditions of many years. From that day to this I have never seen a class that daunted me in any way, never had to deal with any crowd of boys that gave me any sort of misgiving. It was a great year.

In the springtime the one remaining member of the "gang"—the shrewdest boy I ever had to deal with—was caught dead to rights. I had succeeded in making a case against him several times, but he had always made a clever defense and left me apparently in the wrong. However, this time there was no getting away from the evidence, and so the last leader of the lost cause was promptly deported.

In the spring another event occurred which caused me to take quick and effective action, and I do not know to this day whether I blundered or not. It happened in the dormitory.

It was Saturday night, the night when the boys got their clothes bags. The process of retiring was always longer on Saturday than on other nights, and during that process the lamplights were all turned on full. Everything appeared to be going nicely. There was perfect silence.

All at once, for some unknown reason, the prefect in charge of the divisions at the further end of the dormitory walked out. And then the fun began.

It was the season of green apples; and no sooner was the assistant prefect gone than apples began to roll on the floor. I could hear the rolling, but of course could not perceive those who were engaged in the mischief. It was a very warm night; all

the windows were open. With the rolling of the apples there was giggling here and there. I must admit that I became vexed. The misconduct came from boys who were trusted and who were supposed to be among the very best boys in the school. I checked the trouble, but it recurred. It would not have happened at all had the prefect remained at his post. Then I took drastic methods. I closed every window in the dormitory and left the boys to stew the whole night.

Many a time since I have asked myself whether I acted wisely. Upon my word, I don't know the answer yet. The fact is that in punishing all for the misconduct of a few I succeeded in restoring order. Also, there was no further disorder of that kind in the dormitory. Yet I was called to account. I was told that I had been unjust. Now what is the answer?

When I was a boy at St. Louis University, the teacher punished the whole class because two or three boys had misbehaved. As he was unable to find out who the offenders were, we were all made to suffer; and, to rub it in, as it were, our good teacher made us all write an essay to show why it was just to punish all for the faults of a few. I must say that I did not see his standpoint at all, and wrote an essay in rebuttal of his stand. So there you are.

Well, the year came to an end. It found St. Mary's with a wonderful set of boys. It found discipline well established; in fact it was a very success-

ful year. For me it had been a hard year. Had I been more tactful, I could have accomplished the same results with less friction. At any rate it was a year full of experiences which were of value to me in all the years that followed.

CHAPTER VIII

Pioneer Work

IN THE last chapter I spoke at considerable length of trials and difficulties. The reader might gather that the boys attending St. Mary's were a disreputable lot. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is true that in this particular year there happened to come together an unusual number of difficult characters. Some should never have been accepted. Early in the year the fine standard maintained by the students was in danger of being considerably lowered, but that was only for a period of a few weeks.

In the meantime the boys, in general, were unusually good. The leaders of the school, young men to whom everyone looked up with respect and admiration, were remarkable characters. Jack Cunningham, Dick Dunne, Paul Ozanne and Horace Hagan were recognized leaders. All four of them were remarkable. Jack Cunningham and Dick Dunne became priests. Both promised to go far; but death cut them off early in their careers. Horace Hagan is also dead. Two of his sons have since attended St. Mary's College, and one of them, Horace Hagan, II, is now one of the leading men in Oklahoma. Of Paul Ozanne I have heard nothing in later years, but I know that he is a credit to his alma mater. Around these modern young

men were grouped a number of high-minded students, many of whom afterwards entered the religious life or became secular priests.

Also the smaller boys did not want for leaders. As I write, there come vividly before me four youngsters whose fine characters and winning ways unconsciously planted in my imagination the seeds that were to result in a series of books depicting the Catholic American boy. The quartet was made up of Joe Garvy, George Kister, Tom Donnelly and Frank Conroy. You could trust those boys much farther than you could see them. They were pure, truthful, and with a high sense of honor. But they were not prigs. There was too much in them for that sort of thing. Just as Cunningham, Ozanne and Dunne led the large boys in athletics, so Kister and Donnelly were the unquestioned athletes of the younger set. Also they were loved and respected by every small boy without exception. Conroy and Donnelly are dead. The other two are now the Reverend George Kister, S. J., and the Reverend Joseph Garvy, S. J.

The years have not changed these two. They have realized the promises of their youth. Father Kister is as tactful and agreeable as he was nearly half a century ago. He is a model superior, at present presiding over the destinies of St. Xavier High School, Cincinnati, and previously, for six years, rector of Campion College, Prairie du Chien, which, under his rule, attained a success surpassing the record of all previous years. Father Garvy for years has been the inspiring professor of English

in the juniorate at Florissant, one of the most scholarly men in the province.

It is true, then, that at the end of the year which I spoke of in the previous chapter the standard of St. Mary's College was extremely high. The most popular boys, the boys with the most influence, were unquestionably the best boys in the school.

Also, discipline was flourishing, and studies were more satisfactory than ever before; and this improvement in studies was beyond doubt owing to the splendid direction and influence of Father Coppens. It was in this year, too, that the honor system was inaugurated at St. Mary's. It worked so well that it has never been changed to this day.

So it came about that at the end of the year the boys left for their various homes in great good humor. They carried away from St. Mary's an evident admiration for the various improvements. We were advertised north and south and east and west by our loving friends. So, in consequence, it became evident early in the vacation days that our numbers for the coming year would be largely augmented.

Then our rector, Father Coppens, took a new step. He arranged for the opening of a new division in the college, the Junior Division.

St. Mary's College, in its origin, was, I believe, a haphazard affair. Originally it was an Indian mission. The school at first had been an Indian school. As the years went on, the Indians, most of them, were taken to another part of the country, and white boys began to slip in. Among these

was one who afterwards became a distinguished Jesuit, the Reverend James Conway, a man who in philosophy, theology, and on the lecture platform achieved remarkable success.

I remember that on my first arriving at St. Mary's there were even then in attendance eight or nine real Indians. Also, there was quite near the college an Indian reservation.

But it was the day of the white man; the settlers were pressing westward and the Indian was disappearing. We no longer address our letters to St. Mary's, as we did in those days, as being in Pottawatomie County. The Indian is now almost forgotten.

On my first arrival the school was rather patriarchal in character. There was a stable of horses, and quite a number of the boys were proud and happy to act as grooms. All their time outside of school hours was devoted to the care of the horses. The washroom was in the hands of students. In fact it was a great privilege to take care of that department. In the refectory the serving was done by boys proud of the office. No, they were not working out part-payment on their board and tuition. They were proud to do it for nothing. For all this there was a reason. Those who served at table, who worked in the washroom, who ministered to the horses—all of them got the privilege of getting away from the yard.

There was, besides, another set of boys who were on the privilege list. They were the followers of Brother Goodwin, the Nimrod of St. Mary's. He

was a hunter. Around him was grouped a set of boys who, occasionally allowed to join in the hunt, were only too glad to clean the guns and to assist him daily in making the beds in the dormitory. They too could get out of the yard. Up to the time that Father Coppens became president, the students were not allowed to leave the yard without some prefect in attendance. When they went out, they went in a body. These walks were not a matter of choice. When the prefects, having doffed their cassocks and put on citizens' clothes, came to the yard and sounded a whistle, the boys at once fell into line, each one with his assigned partner. In those days a boy, on his entrance, was measured and at once assigned a partner of his own height for the entire year. Whenever they went to any exercise, they went in ranks, and these ranks were fixed. It was the day of many processions.

However, when it came to a holiday walk, the students were only too eager to fall into line. Out they stepped and walked to Pawnee Creek, to the woods skirting the river, or to some chosen goal; and on arriving, the prefect clapped his hands and announced "scatteration." When the prefect looked around a moment later there was not a boy to be seen. All had disappeared. This "scatteration" was the one occasion when the older students had a chance to smoke undisturbed; for at that time no provision of any kind was made to allow the older boys to smoke.

All this was very patriarchal, but it was abolished when Father Coppens became rector. A smoking

room was instituted, and the older students, provided they had the written permission of their parents, were allowed at certain times to smoke. As for getting out of the yard, this privilege was allowed on holidays to all boys who had obtained testimonials of excellent deportment.

All this, as the reader may easily imagine, was revolutionary. There was one circumstance connected with these changes which made them revolutionary to the highest degree. Under the old regime, the hunters, the hostlers, the washroom men, and the waiters-at-table were not, as a rule, selected for their good conduct. On the contrary—I am speaking of the time when I arrived at St. Mary's—many of the most difficult characters in the yard were the ones who enjoyed the privileges. The good boys were often ignored. A quick end to this was brought about by a system of allowing privileges on good conduct. No doubt this change, unquestionably for the better, had much to do with adding to the difficulties of my first year as prefect. But it worked, and it continues to work to this day.

And now a word as to the spiritual condition of St. Mary's. The students were good Catholic boys. Communions were very frequent; the whole school appeared at the holy table in a body each Sunday. After each meal large groups climbed the stairs and made a devout visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps the most striking thing in those days was the Angelus. Three hundred boys might be in the yard, all engaged in play of some sort or other. At the sound of the Angelus all movement ceased, each

boy stood at attention with bared head, raised his heart and mind to God and said that beautiful prayer in silence. I am told that that custom still prevails at St. Mary's.

In going over this crucial year at St. Mary's, there comes to me the memory of a boy in my class with whom I could not get along. I did not understand him. No doubt he did not understand me. Yet he was very intriguing. He was a fine-looking fellow, apparently rather morose of disposition. I did my best to help him along, but apparently to no purpose.

One day there came to me a letter from his father, a physician if I remember rightly, and, to judge by his diction, a polished gentleman. The boy had written him complaining very bitterly of me. The charges he made I read with rounded eyes. Evidently he did not understand me at all. I wrote his father a rather sharp letter in return, giving him my side. Almost by return mail the doctor answered me, apologizing for much that he had said and expressing himself as perfectly satisfied.

Well, the year went on, and the boy stuck to the class and made good. But I could never get near him.

Many years passed away—possibly four decades. I was seated in my office at St. Xavier School when there came a telephone call from the boy I did not understand. He was in Cincinnati on business and was most desirous that I should lunch with him that day. Of course I accepted the invitation. I was anxious to see the boy that I could not understand.

We dined together, if I remember rightly, at the Sinton Hotel. The company assembled was made up of four or five of the leading men of Cincinnati. It was, by reason of the company, a delightful meal. The boy I did not understand had grown up a distinguished man. He was good to look upon, frank, bold, and honest as the sun. In fact he was too honest for the company he was in. Some of his remarks about the art and architecture of Cincinnati hit them between the eyes. He had come to this city to put over a big deal; but the big deal was not put over. He stood in his own light.

The boy whom I had not understood was now one of the foremost sculptors of America—everybody knows him. His name is Gutzon Borglum.

In the light of experience I have come to understand Mr. Borglum and others of his kind. He was an artist. He had the artistic temperament. Now anybody who knows human nature can easily understand what it is for a boy of that sort to be hedged in by the rules and regulations of a boarding school.

One word more about this year, and I think I will have said enough to bring out its lights and shades.

There was no swimming pool in those days, but there was swimming. The boys went to the Kaw River. It was a treacherous stream. On one day the river might be so low that it would be hard to find a place fit for swimming; a day or two after, the river was so high and the current so strong that almost every part was dangerous.

It was my duty to take the boys to the river,

assisted by Mr. Mulconry, a remarkable prefect. We who were in charge realized the danger. We had to be on the watch all the time. Realizing this, as we marched through the woods down to the riverside, we always said the litanies, in which the students joined with real fervor. All understood that we were praying that no one should drown.

On many an occasion there was real danger. I just now recall saving six or seven boys who had been carried beyond their depth, and were unable to swim farther. Once three boys were swung into the treacherous current and were bobbing up and down like corks. I got first one and then a second. When I went for the third, he was not to be seen. Scanning the water closely, I saw a bubble, and down I dived. The boy was there and was brought out a very scared youth.

But the great fact remains that no boy was ever drowned in the Kaw River. It is not for us to interpret the providence of God in matters like this, but I think that the prefect and the boys of St. Mary's have some right to conclude that God graciously heard their prayers.

CHAPTER IX

The Small Yard

AS I have already said, I was put in charge of the small yard. It was something new at St. Mary's. It started under the finest auspices. The four small boys whom I mentioned in the last chapter were to form the nucleus of that department. Other small boys of the previous year were also well known to me. The yard was east of the former yard, now in the possession of the larger boys. It had no equipment. There was a dormitory, and beneath it a washroom and playroom for the new division.

My assistant prefect was a very beautiful character, Mr. Frank Luersman. He was a saint. Mildness and humility were his characteristics. Also, he was an indefatigable worker. He had charge of the washroom and the dormitory and did his tasks most willingly, but being a man actually without guile, he was no disciplinarian. I remember that when coming from my dinner into the yard, after I had seen the boys through their dinner, I would look around and notice how many were absent. On inquiring of Mr. Luersman, he would look blank; he did not know that they had slipped away. In his whole make-up, there was not the least scintilla of suspicion. He trusted everybody.

For all that, the small yard started well and

prospered. There was a high standard among the boys. In fact there were only two or three boys in the yard who were not strictly moral, and any boy who used profane or vile language was promptly snubbed. That was the least punishment inflicted upon him. Sometimes he was dealt with quite drastically.

However, it would be a mistake to think that the boys were mollycoddles. Many of them were bubbling over with mischief, and one had to be on the *qui vive* always.

In that first year of the junior division there was one famous gang in the yard. It was known as the Pitts Gang, the leader being William Pitts, known to his intimates as "Crazy" Pitts. Why Willie Pitts, a boy whom I always liked and esteemed, was called crazy is beyond me. He was a boy of many inventions and willing to take a long chance in carrying out some of his daring designs. But he had a splendid head and good judgment. I had the pleasure of meeting William a few years ago. He is alive and prospering and has realized all his promises.

However, it must be admitted that he was rather reckless. His recklessness, however, never involved him in anything dishonorable. I remember a trick of his which delighted the whole study hall. Smearing his upper lip with red ink and holding a handkerchief to his somewhat pugnacious nose, he walked up the center aisle of the study hall, and, signs of distress on his mobile face, held up his hand for permission to go out, which, of course,

was promptly allowed by the study keeper. Picture the delight of his friends who had seen him prepare the mimic nosebleed in advance.

Of course I presided over the small boys' dormitory. It was easy work. The dormitory was one long, open room, with no obstructions of any sort. Seated at my desk, I read while the boys got themselves into their beds. There was no disorder of any sort. There was perfect silence and speedy disrobing. Silence was the first law of the dormitory. In fact I never spoke myself. If a boy grinned or giggled or was in any way out of order, as rarely happened, I simply beckoned with my finger. He came to my side, and ignoring him, I let him stand there for fifteen or twenty minutes.

So it went on for several months. There came a night when things were different. I was disturbed in my reading by the conduct of one boy who had just jumped into bed. He jumped out again. There was a tendency to giggle. I arose and surveyed the whole dormitory. Another boy got into bed, and the slats gave way under him. A third boy found that his sheets had been doubled. Someone had made a private visit to the dormitory and fixed things for a scene.

I turned the lamp at my desk on full and kept my eye on the whole sweep of beds. The tendency to giggle was suppressed by a single look; and in a few minutes all were in their beds courting the sleep which they always needed.

On the next morning I asked Mr. Luersman whom he had allowed in the dormitory during the

preceding day. He gave me the list. At once the mystery was solved. There was only one boy in that list who would have thought of carrying out an enterprise like that. That boy was my friend William Pitts.

"William," I said, "what did you mean by upsetting the order of the dormitory when you went up there yesterday?"

William colored.

"I just wanted to have a little fun," he said.

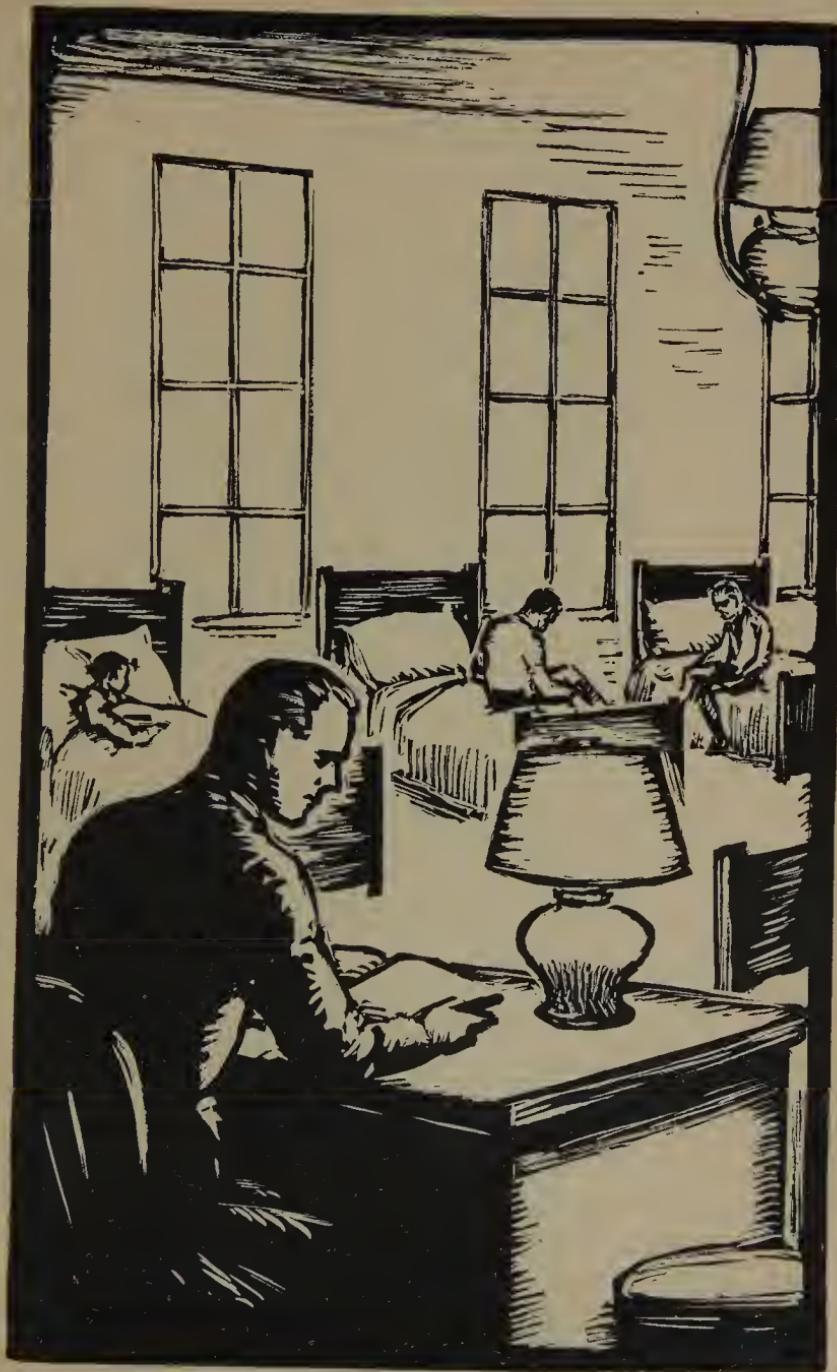
"Well, William," I said, "that will be the end of all fun in the dormitory. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," he said.

Nor did I punish him or scold him; and it was the end.

There were some very sound sleepers in that dormitory. One of them was a little boy of about twelve. We shall call him William. The ringing of the bell in the morning did not disturb his slumbers. Hitting him over the knuckles with a large key, symbol of the prefect's authority, did not bring him to any visible sign of consciousness. Many a time I took William bodily out of bed and trotted him up and down the aisles for one or two minutes. Even then he was not fully awake.

But there were other sound sleepers there. With all due modesty, I may claim to have been second only to William himself. Every morning at an unearthly hour—half-past four—an old lay brother, whose business it was to arouse the community, would, lantern in hand, enter the dormitory and make his way from the door to my bed at the



"Seated at my desk, I read while the boys got themselves into bed"

farther end. His method of arousing was novel. Taking the pillow from under my head—and it was not a soft pillow by any means—he would raise it into the air and bang it down upon me. It was very unpleasant but effective.

One morning, for some reason that I never could explain, I awoke before his arrival. In fact I was wide awake, and rising, began to think of his pending arrival. He would not hit me that morning. But why deprive the good man of his regular exercise? Going halfway down the dormitory to the bedside of my friend Willie, I took the sleeping innocent in my arms and carried him to my own bed. There I wrapped him securely under the coverlet and stepped aside to wait for results. Presently the brother appeared at the door, lantern in hand. Beside Willie's bed I squatted low and let him pass. Arriving at my bed, he put his lantern on my desk, took the pillow from under Willie's head, raised it into the air, and brought it down with all his force upon the sleeping boy. Following the impact there came a squeal that made the brother jump. He got his lantern, peered at Willie, and then looked around for me. I was not to be seen, and with a look of wonder on his face the old brother retired.

After a wait of one or two minutes I returned to my bed, took Willie in my arms and restored him to his own place. The next day he knew nothing about it.

The leaders of the yard that year were George Kister and John Donnelly. George was an undersized boy, but as active as a cat. John was well

grown. Both of these boys figure as characters in my "Tom Playfair" series of stories. It was a gala occasion when Donnelly and Kister put on the gloves. Both were leaders in the field of sports; both were good baseball players.

One of the difficulties of those days was to keep the boys busy in the hours of recreation. There was no trouble in the autumn or in the springtime; but the long and dreary winter had its difficulties. Basketball was unknown, and the game of football, as played in the last thirty or forty years, did not exist.

I thought at that time, and I still think, that I had the small boys' yard well in hand. I knew pretty much everything that was going on. I had no inferiority complex. I was successful.

And yet there were things to be amended. Two mistakes of that year I vividly recall. The smaller one was that I sometimes called boys by their nicknames. It might be that the small hero signed himself by that nickname. Writing a note to a friend, he might sign himself "Affectionately, Papy," or "Devotedly, Seven Dollars," or "Yours as ever, Satan." Also it was true that this boy expected his friends to call him by that name. But that name could be used only by his equals. He resented it coming from superiors. So one of the lessons I learned that year was to respect the small boy in his sense of dignity.

The other mistake was a grave one. I was teaching that year the first year of Latin. All the boys in the class were small boys. All of them were nice

fellows. I had no trouble in teaching them or in managing them, but there was no class I ever taught over which I had less influence. It took me a long time to find out the reason, and when I found it out, I was appalled. The boys of that class had gotten into their heads that I had favorites—pets. They said so, too, although they did not say it to me.

Then I took to examining myself. Looking into the matter closely, I was pained to discover that I had laid myself open to the charge. I had shown a special interest in some boys, and the others had noticed it. This I had done in good faith. In fact, I had been asked to show special interest. There had been no injustice of any sort. But it is not enough that we be just; it is highly important that we also seem to be just. As I reflected upon all this towards the end of that year, another thought came to me. I had asked for that class; I had not been assigned to it by my superiors. Then and there I made a resolution, which I have kept from that day to this. I have allowed my superiors to select my work; and I am convinced that if we leave things to the providence of God and to the requirements of obedience there will be a special blessing upon our work.

As for appearing to play favorites, I do not think that I have made that mistake since. In fact I learned a lesson in boy psychology then which has served me well ever since. Years later I was put in charge of a class, taking the place of a professor who had taught it for two or three months. It

was a class of small boys, and to my amazement I found a very ugly spirit amongst them. The boys were jealous, and they showed it. They were suspicious. Watching carefully for a few days, I found out the cause.

There was a very nice little boy in the class, who, more polished than the others, was also intellectually their superior. The former teacher had made much of him. The results were apparent. My former blunder proved to be a great help to me. The solution was clear. That one boy I treated coldly. In order to be kind, I was almost cruel to him. In a few weeks he had become popular again; the ugly spirit was gone, and although he continued to lead the class, nobody seemed to mind.

Well, when I came to the end of the year, I had a pretty conceit of myself. I thought that I had had a very successful year.

No doubt it was the providence of God that the rector should think otherwise. He gave me a good talk, pointed out many things in which I had been wanting, and sent me away a sadder and wiser man. The sadness did not last. But it was very salutary. The wisdom did not wear away so easily. I have not the least doubt that the criticisms of the Father Rector were good for my soul. Also, he did point out my real blunder of the year, to wit, my favoritism. I had acted in good faith, but I had blundered.

So ended the two hardest working years of my life. I had had a breakdown during the Christmas holidays, but I did not think it amounted to any-

thing. I am persuaded now that it came from over-work. It was in no way connected with worry. In the coming fall I was to go to Woodstock College to begin my philosophical studies. My responsibilities for the time were over, and freedom from care put a new joy into my life.

CHAPTER X

My First Year of Philosophy

THE summer following my inauguration of the small boys' yard at St. Mary's was an unusually pleasant one. The Reverend Father Buschart, at that time provincial of the Missouri province, had acquired for the teaching scholastics a beautiful villa, known to this day as Beulah Island. After the year's hard work in the various colleges Beulah Island was awaiting the Jesuit teachers for a prolonged outing. In front of our villa on the island stretched a long lake, behind our villa a smaller lake. There were very few villas in the neighborhood. It was at that time an undiscovered country.

The fishing was of the best. It was during that summer that I gained the title of the lone fisherman. After breakfast I would set forth in an old flat-bottom boat and use what little knowledge I had of fishing. I was far from being an expert, knowing nothing of the tricks of rod and reel. My education, piscatorially speaking, confined itself to the wriggling worm, with line, sinker and cork; and my usual successes consisted of a string of perch, sunfish and catfish.

Returning about eleven o'clock for spiritual reading, examination of conscience, and dinner, followed by an hour's recreation, I would seek my room, in-

dulge in the luxury of reading some interesting book, rounding out the early afternoon with a nap.

Before the evening meal there was a swim in the lake. In those days we of the male persuasion contented ourselves with the wearing of a pair of trunks. It never occurred to us that anything more was necessary. The women folk, at that time, when they went swimming, were clad from head to toe. I thought then, and still think, that they were rather overdressed. No such criticism can be leveled at the fair sex today, whether in swimming or out. The whole matter has been reversed. In the present century no man would be so brazen as to enter the water in trunks alone. The whirligig of time brings about curious changes. Today the male being is far more modest than he was thirty-five years ago, while the female of the species, whose traditions have ever been associated with modesty —well, let's go on with the story.

The finest part of the day followed our evening supper. Then it was that in the light of the setting sun lovers of rod and reel filled the boats and went out for the real fishing of the day. As a rule, I went with the same crowd, and a fine crowd it was. Mr. Matthew McMenamy, Mr. Burke, Mr. Banks Rogers and I made up the crew. We fancied ourselves to be the best fishermen on the island. Generally we rowed to the small lake back of our villa, which abounded in silver bass, and caught them by the score.

Occasionally we went out into the other lake, and finally discovered there a spot where the fishing was

really good. I remember one evening, on having arrived at this special place, we quickly succeeded in landing a large black bass. It was a real catch—something to write home about to one's aunt or grandmother. Another boat came upon the scene as we landed this big fish. Its occupants were filled with admiration. We were anxious to sustain the sensation we had created, and we did it in the following way. Every five or ten minutes, when the fishermen of the other boat were not looking, we would let our fish out into the water and haul him in again, giving our admirers the impression that we had caught about nine great big black bass.

Later on I made use of this incident in one of my stories—I think it was “*Claude Lightfoot*.” A critic, writing in a Catholic periodical of Great Britain, accused me of plagiarizing this incident from “*Handy Andy*” by Charles Lever. I went to the trouble of getting “*Handy Andy*,” a book which I had read when a small boy, and discovered that Mr. Lever had made use of the same episode. No doubt both of us had drawn from actual life, certainly not from each other.

Father Daniel Lowry was superior of the villa during that season. The Jesuit teachers, under his superiorship, had as happy a time as could be desired. It was a wonderful vacation, and when it came to an end, I was ready and eager to go to Woodstock College in Maryland to begin my studies. I thought at the time that I was in perfect health, but looking back, I am inclined to think, in the light of after events and of a certain episode

which happened before going to Woodstock, that I was by no means as well as I thought.

Before going to Woodstock I spent a few days in St. Louis, where I suffered a terrible attack of scruples. At the time I did not know what scruples were. Today, in the light of experience, I know that I had a genuine attack. I began to worry about my soul's salvation. One night I got into such a state that I had to rush off to confession. I was very lucky in my choice. I went to the Reverend Florentine Boudreaux, author of "The Happiness of Heaven" and "God Our Father," a very holy man who was as witty as he was holy. I opened to him my soul and expressed to him my fears, when, to my great astonishment, he said that he would go to hell for me.

"You needn't worry," he said; "I'll go to hell for you myself."

No sentence ever addressed to me gave me more strength and consolation. I felt at once he understood my feelings and my condition and that he knew exactly what he was talking about. It was an almost instantaneous cure. My scruples were gone forever.

Scruples, it is well known, arise in most cases from abnormal nerves. My scruples, cured as they were, arose, I now firmly believe, from that one cause.

Light-hearted, and with that zest which youth has for travel and variety, I went to Woodstock absolutely without a care.

Woodstock College is an hour's drive from Balti-

more, Maryland. The college itself is situated, and isolated, on a high hill. Hither, to make their studies in philosophy, came the Jesuit scholastics from the New York-Maryland, the Missouri, the New Orleans, and the California provinces. There were also sundry representatives from various parts of Europe and South America. Perhaps the finest thing about the education given there was the reaction provided by meeting gifted men of many nations and many climates and varying customs.

Before going to Woodstock I had heard much of the place. In fact, when on occasions I had been unusually smart, one or the other of my brethren would say, "Wait till you get to Woodstock—they'll teach you a few tricks there."

So, reaching that celebrated house of studies, I was determined to be on the offensive and not to wait until somebody took advantage of me. As a matter of fact I was not educated to a high degree at that time. Most of the men coming to Woodstock with me were several years younger. They had come direct from the novitiate and the juniorate to make their studies before going into the field of teaching, whereas I had been prefect and teacher for two years and a half. They reckoned me as an old fellow. I encouraged them in their opinion and was at pains to make them realize how little I knew.

I was, in fact, a poor Latin scholar; and I let everyone know it. I flaunted my ignorance, informed all how rusty I was in Latin, and how I intended to improve myself by reading Cicero's "De

Amicia" and "De Senecte." Pronouncing "Amicia" and "Senecte" in the clearest tones imaginable must have scandalized those young men, who had just come from the class of "De Amicitia" and "De Senectute." They pitied me. They considered me—not without justice—an awful ass. It came to a point where several were going to give me special classes in Latin. They wrote about me; but it was all in the way of charity. This sort of thing I carried on until the classes began, by which time I had acquired the reputation of being a practical joker.

However, there were other things that happened during that vacation. It was then that I really entered upon the field which I have not deserted to this day—the field of writing for the young. My entrance into this field was quite casual. Among my Missouri brethren I had the reputation of being a literary man. One of my dearest friends at Woodstock in those days was Mr. John Weir. He admired me far beyond my deserts, and naturally I liked him.

One day he said to me, "Mr. Finn, why don't you write a story for the Sacred Heart Messenger?"

I answered that I had never thought of it.

"Go on," he said, "and do it. Father Sestini, the editor, needs good short stories, and you are the one who can write them."

I was feeling, as I have said, very good in those days, and so I sat down and dashed off a good-sized story. I called it "Charlie's Victory." Looking back, I recognize in it no special merit. It was in-

spired, I can now see, by an episode in "Fabiola." I brought it to Father Sestini. The "Messenger of the Sacred Heart" had been edited by this good Italian priest for many years. It was printed and published in Woodstock. Father Sestini didn't know me, probably had never heard of me. He looked suspicious as he received the manuscript and said he would examine it.

A day or two after, he sent for me and returned it, saying that he had no need for stories. This might have been a rebuff, but I was feeling too good at that time to worry about a trifle.

When Mr. Weir found my manuscript had been refused, he was disturbed in mind. Nor was he minded to let the matter rest. He himself had read the story, and of course admired it. He admired anything I wrote, no matter what. Now there happened to be in Woodstock at that time a very remarkable man, Father Shallo, of the California province. He was a literary man to the finger tips. Also, he was high in the esteem of Father Sestini.

Mr. Weir went to Father Shallo and told him about my story. Father Shallo came to me and asked to see it. To my great surprise he was highly pleased. He was good enough to tell me that my narrative style was excellent, my transitions natural, etc., etc.

Then came Father Sestini to ask for the manuscript once more. It appeared presently in the Messenger, and good old Father Sestini came to me and told me he would take any story I wrote for

him. All this, of course, was very pleasing to me. Whereupon I sat me down and wrote another story called "Bertie and Sophy"—a tale which had no merit at all, so far as I can see. This too went into the Messenger. I was an author at last. Judge of my exaltation when I saw both stories copied by other Catholic magazines.

Of course I must say, to do myself justice, that I was not unduly inflated. I was pleased and no doubt moderately conceited; but I did not feel any assurance that I was a writer. In fact I thought at that time, as I did for three or four years later, that any of my brother Jesuits could have done just as good work, or better, had they taken the trouble to put their pens to the task. Looking at the matter from every standpoint, I believe today that, while I was not exactly proud, I still had a pretty conceit of myself.

With the opening of school on or about September 10, the question of further writing was put in abeyance. I was in Woodstock to study philosophy, and to philosophy I intended to devote myself for the coming three years. Man proposes, and as a clever brother Jesuit of mine said, God proposes too. Something happened on the second of October, about three weeks after the opening of philosophy, which changed everything. I was playing baseball during the afternoon recreation, and in running from second to third base I had a fall which somehow or other injured my back. From the ball field I went to bed, but not to sleep. I had become the victim of insomnia.

But the illness affected only my body, and my imagination seemed to be kindled into new activity. Unable to attend classes, I spent my days in bed. During one of those first sleepless nights there flashed upon me a story which, during the long dark hours, evolved itself into tale and incident for many hours. The story stirred me. It banished sleep utterly.

The next night, in order to exorcise this demon of insomnia, I proceeded to put the story on paper. I think I wrote it in the course of three days. It was "Ada Merton." To this day I have not been able to make up my mind as to the merits of this tale. Many have told me that it is the best story I ever wrote. This, of course, I do not believe. A few of my best friends have assured me that it is the worst, and that I ought to have been ashamed to publish it. Nor do I believe them. I know that "Ada Merton" has done a great deal of good; I know also that it appeals strongly to many natural hearts. Therefore I have published and republished it in many editions. It has proved to be an excellent story for children preparing for their First Communion and has inspired them to greater love of Our Lord.

With this literary effusion put on paper, I did sleep a little better. Nevertheless I was a victim of insomnia. If my memory serves me right, I did not attend philosophy classes during October, November, and December. My superior was very good to me. Unasked, he gave me a very fine room,

and did everything to make my condition as pleasant as possible.

It was painful for me to stand still, painful to sit down. I was only easy when lying on my bed or when walking. In those days it was torture for me to sit even during the eating of a meal. I was sent to doctors in Washington and Baltimore. None of them could make out what was the matter with me. I must have been an interesting study to my father rector. He saw me playing handball; he saw me walking about briskly. Also, he saw me lying in bed at all hours. As the doctors could not make me out, what could he think? He got the idea that I was extremely fond of writing. "Ada Merton" was appearing in the *Messenger*, succeeding two former stories. Also, during my enforced stay in my room I did much reading. The good man was forced to think that, being a writer, I was obsessed by too much imagination. I am perfectly sure that he considered me a hypochondriac. Nevertheless he treated me with the utmost kindness.

To solve the problem of my attending classes, he bought a sofa and placed it in the classroom. And so, from January to June, I attended class with the others—the others seated at their desks, and I lying at ease on the lounge. Many a time in those class hours my sense of humor was tickled. Men about me, seated in stiff chairs, were struggling against sleep; I, lying on my lounge, was ever wide awake. It was delightful to pinch into wakefulness any fellow within my reach.

During my absence in October, November, and

December from class, I did not lose all the benefits of the teaching. Mr. Charles Macksey, one of the most brilliant young men I have ever met, came to my room after each class session and carefully went over with me the matter of the whole lecture. Mr. Macksey was a member of the eastern province, a man I had never met before reaching Woodstock. His charity was of a kind I have never failed to meet in my dealing with the Jesuits of his and other provinces. He died years ago in Rome, one of the great professors in that city of learned men, and we who knew him can never forget him. He was a man whose wonderful flow of language, touched with wit and humor, was a fitting instrument for the conveyance of his clear and lofty thoughts.

Outside of Mr. Macksey's instruction and my attendance at the lectures, I did very little study until early spring. In fact I was fighting against depression, discouragement—the blues; and it was a hard fight. I remember that at various times I felt so despondent that I would lock my door, refuse all visitors and bury myself in a book.

However, there came a change in spring. My back, it is true, was as bad as ever; but my spirits had revived, my appetite had come back, and the spirit of spring and of youth had come into my blood. During the month of May I took up my philosophy textbook and set to work with a vengeance. I was determined to get ready for the examinations, which came towards the end of June. I had confidence in myself.

This confidence probably had been infused into

me through the encouraging words of Father Piccirillo, a distinguished and venerable Jesuit. An Italian, he had entered the Society at the age of fifteen, and spent most of his years in important positions in Italy, having been at one time a confessor of Pius IX. He was a keen reader of character, a diplomat, and a man of the highest culture. One did not perceive his culture at first blush, for he murdered the English language whenever he spoke, and he continued to do so till the day of his death. He was admired and loved by Jesuits of every clime and nation.

Some time before the coming of spring he had summoned me to his room. He made a long speech to me which filled me with astonishment. He informed me that I had a splendid intelligence. This rather staggered me. In all my years in and out of the Society no one had ever made any such statement. It is true that when I was a boy of seven my immediate family expected great things of me. They considered me a budding genius. They thought that when I went to St. Louis University I would carry off any number of honors. When I did nothing of the kind, they promptly gave me up, and the low opinion of me to which they had fallen was shared, as far as I know, by all my Jesuit professors and prefects.

When Father Piccirillo made this astounding declaration, I half believed him. At any rate it gave me a little courage and inspired me to make an attempt in the field of philosophy, a field in which, he said, I could hold my own with the best

of my class if I only gave my mind to it. Whatever I thought of his opinion then, it is certain that to-day I believe he was wrong. There were men studying with me who had far better gifts for philosophy.

At any rate, I did study for three or four weeks of that spring. I was delighted with myself and felt quite sure that before examination time I would be ready to face the ordeal, when all of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, there came another collapse. Insomnia set in, my appetite left me, the megrims assaulted me with a new force. This sudden change was unexpected. It upset me completely. In fact, in a certain sense, I gave up.

Accordingly I wrote a letter to my Father Provincial, telling him that I did not see how I could keep on with my studies until I recovered something of my health. And having written this, I took to my bed and kept it religiously, eating nothing and doing nothing for several days.

CHAPTER XI

Back to St. Mary's

THE bell had rung for breakfast one morning several days later, when there came a knock at my door. In answer to my summons to enter, the Reverend Father Rascicot entered.

"I have just received a letter from the Reverend Father Provincial," he said. "He tells me that you are to go west for your health. When do you want to start?"

I was lying in my bed. As I listened a wave of supreme joy swept through me.

"By the next train," I said.

"What about your examination?" he asked.

"I haven't looked at a book in three weeks," I answered. "I am not ready. I don't want to take an examination."

Father Rector argued with me; he urged me to do it. He prevailed upon me; and I am very glad that he did. Assuring me that he would have a board of examiners awaiting me in the library at eight o'clock, he left me.

I arose feeling very much better and went over to breakfast. Meantime word had passed among the Missouri-province Jesuits that I was going west, so that when I returned to my room I found it filled with my friends.

The megrims had departed. I was carefree. It

was true I was to face an examination in a few minutes; but, to be honest, I didn't care whether I failed or not, and so was not worried in the least by the prospect. Laughing and chatting till the clock struck eight, I made my way to the examination room and seated myself before the four examiners. I was never cooler in my life.

The examination lasted a half-hour. The time did not seem long to me. I left the room not knowing how well I had done, but convinced that I had not made a fool of myself, which was about the best I could expect. Down to my room again, where there was a quick packing of my trunk, exchange of greetings and good wishes, and lo, within two hours' time I was on the B. & O. going joyfully to my own province. I remember distinctly that when noontime came I entered the diner and ate a hearty meal. It was the first real meal I had taken in three weeks.

On reaching St. Louis I was sent to the villa. I did not see my Father Provincial, who, I think, had he met me, would have told me what he thought of me. Father Buschart, a man of supreme good sense, looked with suspicion upon budding poets and authors. He had been informed of my performances at Woodstock, and I feel quite sure that he considered me a rather perplexing case. At the least, he considered me a dreamer.

During the vacation there was a slight improvement in my health. When the assignments were made for the coming year, I was appointed to go back to St. Mary's, to act as assistant prefect in

the senior division and to teach logic to the graduating class of the commercial department. In his letter to the rector of St. Mary's Father Buschart was good enough to say, "Let Mr. Finn teach logic, as he passed a brilliant examination in that study." This was one of the surprises of my life.

From the early days of my noviceship to the present time I have always thought that if we cast our cares upon the Lord He will not fail us. In that first year of philosophy I had a very difficult time. Suffering again and again from extremely low spirits, which I later discovered were a part of my malady, I had always put my troubles in the hands of God. As the sequel shows, He never failed me.

Two years later, when I returned to Woodstock, Father Rascicot, my old rector, was still in office. He greeted me cordially, and was unusually kind. One day he summoned me. It was an interview which I shall never forget. He said:

"Mr. Finn, I feel obliged to tell you that I misunderstood you very much when you were here before."

He went on in this strain for some time, and the more he spoke, the more I was humbled. It was embarrassing, in a way, for me, a youngster of no standing of any sort, to receive the humble apologies of a good and holy man who always did his duty as he saw it.

He ended his most edifying speech with this statement:

"I want to tell you, Mr. Finn, that I had writ-

ten to your provincial that it was impossible for you to pass your examination in philosophy. You couldn't pass it, I told him, because you had been sick so much and missed so much class. But," he continued, "I added something more. I told him that, even if you had not been sick, you had spent so much time in light reading and in the writing of stories that you could not pass your examination."

Well, I actually had passed—not that I knew particularly anything about the subject, but that God, in His loving providence, had not rejected my prayers when I cast my care upon Him.

The St. Mary's school term began very well. Mr. John Burke was the first prefect. He was a true friend of mine and an unusual young man. He had great tact, was a diplomat, and had an uncanny way of knowing what was going on in the yard. I, too, from my previous years of prefecting, was very well equipped for my position as his assistant. There was no trouble of any sort in controlling the boys. In fact, before trouble could begin, we had a way of nipping it in the bud.

The nearest thing in the way of trouble occurred early in the school year. There had come to St. Mary's a young man from New Mexico. He knew little or nothing of our ways; he was a quiet, peaceful young man, of extraordinary strength. There happened to be in attendance that year another young man, who, blessed with many good qualities, was by way of being a bully. "Seven Dollars" was the name by which he was known.

Now "Seven Dollars" loved the shining mark. Accordingly he picked out as his victim the young Mexican. He tried to annoy the timid fellow. Eventually he succeeded in provoking the Mexican to resentment. The thing did not come to a head, as the Mexican did not wish to fight.

Then "Seven Dollars" began to bluster. He went about the yard telling everybody what he intended to do to the Mexican the first time he got him alone. There was, he announced, going to be a fight to a finish. Mr. Burke and I at once noticed that there was great excitement among the boys. There were talking and whispering and consultations and an air of secrecy. Of course there was no trouble in finding out what it was all about. I took counsel with Mr. Burke and suggested a plan for settling the matter out of hand. Mr. Burke was delighted.

The next morning, when the welcome bell summoned the boys to breakfast, "Seven Dollars" and the Mexican were both requested by me to report in the playroom. Also there came with me the two leading boys of the yard—big, strong fellows, who knew much about boxing and kindred sports.

While, then, the other boys were busy at their breakfast, I addressed myself to "Seven Dollars." I said: "For the past two days you have had the yard in a state of excitement. You have been yearning to have it out with this young man here. He has been very quiet and well behaved, but you have been a little too boisterous for my taste. Now you have said over and over again you want to

have it out. Here's your chance. Take off your coat."

"Boys," I said, turning to the two other boys who had accompanied me, "you are here to see that there is fair play. These boys are going to settle a grudge, and settle it for good."

Then up spoke "Seven Dollars."

"Mr. Finn," he said, "I don't want to fight."

"You mean that?" I asked.

"I certainly do."

"Well," I said, "that's one point settled. As for this young Mexican, he has been a gentleman throughout; he doesn't care about fighting. But as for you, if you dare to open your mouth in the yard about fighting any more, these two boys and I will tell the story about you. Now get out of here."

"Seven Dollars" left a sadder and wiser man, and that was the end of the excitement.

For my sins, no doubt, I was also in charge of a class in geometry. It was a burden, but somehow I managed to get along. The difficulty, however, was settled by circumstances. The work of prefecting combined with that of teaching was too much for my state of health. As the days went on, I became weaker and weaker. Something had to be done; and the rector, seeing the situation, relieved me of prefecting and put me in charge of the third academic class for three hours a day, the easiest work ever given me either before or since in the Society.

It was in those days that I began, carried on,

and finished the story of "Tom Playfair," a subject treated separately in another part of this veracious tale.

Christmas passed; the new year began. But despite the change of occupation my health continued to suffer. Finally, toward the end of January, I was summoned to St. Louis, there to see Dr. Bauduy once more. All during the composition of "Tom Playfair" I had been growing worse and worse, and, so far as I could see, the matter would end in death. Called, therefore, to St. Louis, I was inspired with new hopes. East and west and north and south I had met many doctors, but I had never met one that could diagnose as Dr. Bauduy did.

I remember going to see him. That first interview lasted over an hour. He asked many questions. He prodded me many times. He literally searched me; and at the end of it all he said, "I know what's the matter with you, and I'll cure you in six weeks." Which he did. Four different doctors of eminence had missed my case entirely. Dr. Bauduy discovered my symptoms at one sitting.

At that time he said to me that the kind of life I was living was not suited to my disposition. In fact I believe he hinted that I should have been a cowboy. I paid no attention at the time to his remarks; but I believe now, in the light of after events, that Dr. Bauduy was absolutely right. Humanly speaking, I was not equipped for the life of a Jesuit; but God, in His great goodness, had given me a vocation and, continuing that goodness, had

made it possible for me to do what, humanly speaking, was impossible.

I had very little work during this stay in St. Louis. It was, in consequence, a dull time for me. But at the end of that year I was restored to health and ready once more for a man's work.

Vacation over, I was sent to Cincinnati, Ohio. Then began one of the happiest years of my life. There were assembled at St. Xavier's College that year a set of the finest young Jesuits one could meet anywhere, among them Mr. M. J. O'Connor, Mr. John Weir, Mr. Banks Rogers and Mr. Henry De Laak. They were picked men. It was a privilege to live with such companions.

The class assigned me was the third academic. There were forty-five boys in my charge, and a nicer set I never met. It was a pleasure to teach them; they were nearly all bright, active, and anxious to go ahead. There was more fun in that class than in any I have ever taught. It was my custom to start lessons with a full head of steam. When the situation remained tense for some time, I would relax, and in a moment pandemonium would ensue. When there was every appearance of an incipient riot, I would say, "Now let's get to work again." And at the word there would come a sabbatical calm.

The Reverend Rudolph Meyer, a famous Jesuit in his day, once enunciated the best description of discipline which I have ever heard. He said, "You have perfect discipline in the classroom when you can do anything you please with the boys." Well,

that was the sort of discipline I had. Frequently I would leave the class, closing the door and walking in the corridor outside. In leaving I would mount my biretta on a stick beside the classroom door. As it happened, the boarding on that side of the classroom was built up to about five feet eight inches, the upper part being glass. It gave me infinite delight to think that the boys, seeing my biretta outside, were under the impression that I was under it. One day a bright little fellow named Charlie Gates had occasion to leave the room. He discovered the trick. However, this device of mine was not to secure order. It was merely the playfulness of an overgrown boy.

While my work as a teacher was very good that year, I made one sad mistake. There was a very fine boy in the class who had conceived an unusual admiration for me. He had a wonderful memory and was really a good student. He gave excellent promise in every way. One day, for some trivial offense, I gave him a bitter scolding. It was uncalled for; it was unjust. With more experience I could have covered my unfortunate mistake; but I did not, the result being that I lost my influence upon the boy forever. Such things are sad to think about. Outside of that the year was extremely happy, both for the boys and myself.

At the end of it I was eager to return to Cincinnati; but my health being fully restored, I was once more sent back to Woodstock, Maryland.

CHAPTER XII

“Tom Playfair” Appears

THE one castle in the air I had brought with me from St. Mary's had been shattered. Returning thither, I had in my mind the hope and the ambition to write for our Catholic boys. I did not include the Catholic girl, for the reason, in those days, that I knew absolutely nothing about her. I am wiser now.

Speaking one day to Father Kinsella, a most literary Jesuit and, in the minds of many, the best critic in our province, I mentioned my dream. Very kindly he offered to look over my three early productions and to give a candid opinion. I was delighted. He looked over them and in due time called me to his room.

He spoke kindly and frankly. He pointed out defects galore, and he ended with words to this effect: “And my advice to you, Mr. Finn, is to give up all idea of writing for publication. There is nothing in your work to show that you will ever make a writer.”

Down went my castle in Spain. The only dream I had left was not to come true.

I received his opinion with full acceptance of mind and heart, and left his room with all thought of writing for publication completely abandoned. That night I did not fall asleep until two o'clock

or thereabouts. It was not grief that kept me awake. It was the same old insomnia which hovered over my pillow every night for at least four hours. Indeed I was not at all dismayed. Like Marjory's owl, I remained unusually calm. I can say, with perfect sincerity, that Father Kinsella's words, while changing my plans for the future, neither added to my depression nor influenced my general health, which was absolutely bad, anyhow. My little class absorbed my interest. I came to like them very much. They represented to me the Catholic American boy.

One day I was fiddling at my desk trying to make myself comfortable, while these little boys were hard at it writing a composition. They were all absorbed. The thought of them as representing the Catholic American boy came back to me as I gazed upon them, with greater force than ever. Why could I not put on paper such boys as were before me in the flesh? Within reach of me were a pad of paper and a pencil. I took them and started to write. My pencil moved easily in those days, and in a few minutes I had something written, something for my future boys to listen to. I had written the first chapter of "Tom Playfair."

I little knew at the time that this casual writing of the first chapter of "Tom Playfair" would have a tremendous bearing on the many years which were to follow; I little knew that this chapter marked my second period of writing. The first period, that of experimentation, had been finished in one year, my first year at Woodstock. With

the composition of the two short stories, "Charlie's Victory" and "Bertie and Sophy," and of the rather long story "Ada Merton," my period of apprenticeship was over.

This second period of writing, beginning with the first chapter of "Tom Playfair," is hedged about with strange circumstances. First of all, nothing was further from my thought at the moment than writing for publication. That chapter was written for the boys in my class and for other boys who should come under my care in other years. Secondly, I started this story with nothing else in my mind than to present, once and for all, my ideal of the typical American Catholic boy. And that boy was a composite character. Into him I endeavored to put those qualities which had struck me as bringing out best the things which make the young American boy so interesting and alluring.

Also, in writing this first chapter I had no idea of a complete book, nor of any sort of plot, nor indeed of any set of episodes or adventures. In the words of an old song, I did not know where I was going, but I was on my way.

The first chapter was completed fully ten minutes before the dismissal of class. The boys, too, had finished their compositions, and so I read the chapter to them then and there as I had just written it. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I had my share of vanity. It was fed to the full on that occasion. The entire class listened to me with ears erect, with eyes popping out of their heads, and with an enthusiasm that left nothing to be desired.

Then and there one thing was settled—from that day and until an indefinite date I was determined to furnish those boys with further chapters of "Tom Playfair" and further incidents, real or possible, in a Catholic boarding school. Also, the time for the writing of these coming chapters were determined.

For three months or more I had been lying nightly, from ten-thirty o'clock until about two, making a futile effort to sleep. Hereafter two of these apparently lost hours would be devoted to writing. The working out of this plan was quite simple. At about ten-thirty I would light my lamp, and upon paper mounted on a stiff piece of cardboard I would write one or two chapters each night, lying quite comfortably in bed—the only position at that time in which I was comfortable at all.

In those days my imagination was lively. My pencil never lacked for matter. Each chapter suggested another. Never did I pause to think of what I should write next. In fact my pencil raced over the paper in a futile endeavor to catch up with the incidents, adventures and fun which crowded my brain.

At no time during the forty or fifty days that I wrote did it occur to me that I was writing for the general public. No; I was writing for a boy audience. Day by day the bulk of my manuscript grew bigger and bigger. Day by day my boys followed the series of Tom Playfair's adventures with an eagerness which no doubt spurred me on to further efforts. My happiest hours were spent in reading and writing this amorphous production.

On the other hand, instead of growing better, my health continued to grow worse. Unless something arrested my downward progress—and there was nothing to arrest it in sight—I felt that my life was nearing its close. My superiors too observed that I was growing physically weaker. So, about the first of February, 1884, I departed for St. Louis, a broken-down man, a failure and without anything to show but a thick bundle of manuscript containing neither beginning, middle nor end, a series of adventures and episodes concerning my little friend Tom Playfair.

This manuscript I valued personally, because I thought it was to become a source of pleasure and possibly of healthy ideals to prospective audiences of Jesuit schoolboys. As to its value in any other respect, I held it very cheaply. A few months before, I had been conceited enough to consider myself something of a writer. Father Kinsella had thoroughly disillusioned me.

However, there was still some balm in Gilead. During my five months in St. Louis I tried my "Tom Playfair" on my group of boys. To my delight they took to the story as eagerly as did the boys at St. Mary's. This, I believe, was the one thing which saved me from being overwhelmed by the inferiority complex. With June came the end of one of my darkest years. My health had returned, but it was a precarious thing. It was something one could not bet on. Also, I still treasured the manuscript "Tom Playfair," armed with which, in

the following August, I went to Cincinnati for another year's teaching.

With my arrival in Cincinnati the worst was over. Once more I was put in charge of a third academic class. There were about forty-five boys under my care, and from the start we were on the most friendly terms. It was a delight to teach those boys. They were studious, well-behaved, alert and responsive. I could do anything with them.

As I write, I recall Judge Frank Tracey of Covington, Kentucky, Leo Van Lahr, president of the Provident Bank, and Edward S. Rooney, all three of them shining lights in their community, and all distinguished members of that class of long ago.

The rector of the college was the Reverend Henry Moeller, S. J., one of the most distinguished Jesuits of his day—a poet and an orator. He did not think very much of me or of my ability; and there was a reason. He had been my prefect at St. Louis University years before, and I am ashamed to say that I gave him very little reason to think well of me. He expected very little of me in the conduct of the classes under my charge. He had an idea, wherever he got it, that I had a strong taste for negro minstrels, the real fact being that wild horses could not drag me to that kind of performance. Nor did I do anything to undeceive him.

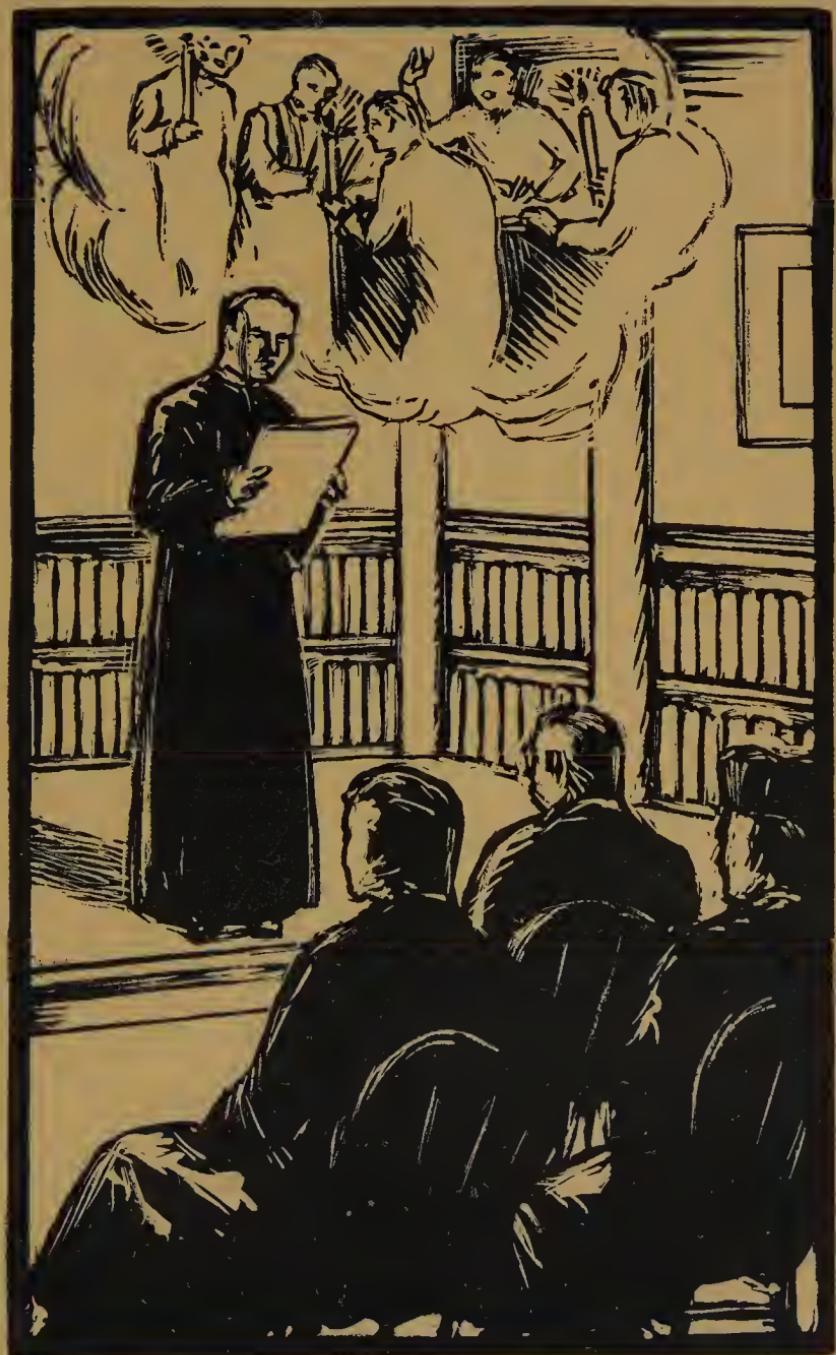
The weeks flew on golden wings, and just before Christmas my third academic boys gave a public specimen of their work in Latin and Greek. Father Moeller and other Jesuits attended the affair. It

was a brilliant success. Father Moeller was taken off his feet, and he ceased to look upon me with dubious eyes. I had really staged a comeback.

It is hardly necessary for me to say that I tried "Tom Playfair" on the boys of my class. Their reactions were the same as those of the boys at St. Mary's and of the boys in St. Louis. Of one thing I was certain; "Tom Playfair" had an appeal for all Catholic boys old enough to start the high-school grades. And so the year passed, a happy year, a year full of happy memories and a year with success. I was rehabilitated again; I had come back.

In the summer of 1885 I returned in good health and excellent spirits to Woodstock, there to resume my broken course in philosophy. It was in the cards for me to spend two years in completing that course and then to go on into four years of theology. However, it did not turn out that way. I had hardly settled down in that famous house of studies when one of the minor officials called upon me and asked me to give a reading at one of the domestic celebrations near at hand. At once I thought of my Playfair manuscript and, without hesitation, I replied that I would be very glad to do so.

On the appointed date I was ready with that chapter of "Tom Playfair" which describes the hero's attempt to exorcise Jimmie Green. To add to the dramatic effect I posted a brother Jesuit behind the stage with an armful of crockery. When in the course of the reading I read out 'Suddenly the bed crashed,' my backstage conspirator dropped



"I was ready with that chapter of 'Tom Playfair' which describes the hero's attempt to exorcise Jimmy Green"

the crockery. It may have been the story, or it may have been the crash of crockery; at any rate the reading of the exorcism scene went over big, to borrow an expression from vaudeville.

My brother Jesuits were lavish in their praise. One of them, Father Fagan, who was considered very literary, came to my room the next day to congratulate me.

He said: "Mr. Finn, if you had more chapters like that about Tom Playfair, it would make a Catholic "Tom Brown."

"I have more," I said, and I brought into light my bale of manuscript.

Father Fagan was astonished.

"May I look at it?" he said.

"Certainly," I replied.

How Father Fagan got through with that manuscript I cannot imagine. It was badly written, done with a lead pencil, uncorrected, and of course loosely thrown together. When he returned it to me, he said it was full of fine things, but that it needed a great deal of correcting and editing; to all of which I agreed.

It was now two years since I had been advised to give up all thought of writing for publication; and I was still of the same mind—such work was not for me. But from that day on I was urged now by one, now by another, to take up my pen again.

It was during that year that a letter from Mr. John Coyle, editor of "The Orphan's Friend," a Boston publication, brought about another change.

He wrote asking me to give him a story for his little paper. In those days such a letter meant a good deal to me. My resolution not to attempt writing for publication—a resolution no doubt undermined by the advice and suggestions of friends—was broken at once. Again I took out the Tom Playfair manuscript, and selected from it the chapters bearing upon the story of Jimmie Aldine, I proceeded to edit and rewrite that particular part. Then I sent the corrected manuscript to my Father Provincial, the Rev. Rudolph J. Meyer. The die was cast. On his answer, I can now clearly see, depended the future course of my work, though I did not then realize it in the least.

In due course came Father Meyer's answer. It filled me with joy. He praised the story generously; but, he added, my boys used slang freely. He went on to say, "Now it is true that in our schools and colleges we *tolerate* slang; but, if in our published writing we use it ourselves, such a course, in a way, would stamp our imprimatur on such objectionable language." Following upon this criticism, he gave me full permission to publish the story in "The Orphan's Friend."

That letter marked another day of my life. With its reception I at once became a writer again; and the publication of the story in "The Orphan's Friend" marked my second period as an author.

Also it presented a problem which at first blush seemed almost impossible of solution. How, I asked myself, can I write a story about a real American boy who talks like a girl? In those ancient days,

be it said, the Catholic girl did not use slang. Her strongest words were "sweet," "delicious," "adorable," "awful." Instead of liking a thing, she loved or adored it, etc., etc. But slang with her was taboo. With the boy it was different. The boys of the 1880's used slang as freely and as vigorously as any flapper of the present day.

Suddenly the problem was solved. It was conceivable to me that, given a boy in a refined family, and surrounded by nothing but a bevy of sisters, and guarded by circumstances from fellowship with lads of his own age, there might be some verisimilitude in presenting him to the juvenile readers as a real character.

Then my mind went back to a vivid memory connected with my first year at Woodstock. I had traveled from Woodstock to Washington, D. C., to consult a doctor; and there, on a street car, I met a little boy, a dainty little fellow, dressed like a little prince, with bright blue eyes and long golden hair. He was a glib talker and constantly interlarded his remarks with "Yes, indeedy" and "No, indeedy." I never had seen the boy again, nor have I to this day, but he had remained a pleasant memory. I had not the least idea as to his name.

At once—being too sick at that time to study—I sat down and in a few days had written for publication my first really long story. The boy's last name was suggested to me by a tall, dignified young father who was then completing his theology at Woodstock. I liked him, I liked his name; fur-

thermore, he too had blue eyes and golden hair. Also, he was every inch a man, as he is to this day. The first name of the boy was simple. I wanted a word to indicate that he was not especially manly; so I called him Percy Wynn.

CHAPTER XIII

My Companions at Woodstock

RETURNING to Woodstock, I began my second year of philosophy with the thought in mind that, after finishing the two years still due, I would go straight on to making my four years in theology. In a word, I was to devote six uninterrupted years to serious study. However, it did not turn out in that way.

There was a difficulty facing me, a grave difficulty, at the beginning of this second year. In addition to philosophy, much stress was to be laid on the natural sciences. In order to make any headway in the sciences it was necessary that I should know something of trigonometry. Now, I was absolutely innocent of that branch of study. We were supposed to have taken it up in the first year. But, owing to my state of health, I had confined myself merely to the most essential things.

Word of my handicap got around among my brother Jesuits. A charitable scholastic, always on the lookout to do a good turn for a brother, came to me one morning and asked me about my difficulties. I told him frankly that I knew nothing of trigonometry.

“Very well,” he said. “I’ll be glad to teach you myself. It is very easy, and I think I can give you

a gentleman's knowledge of it in five or six lessons."

I was most grateful. I told him I would appreciate his help very much. A day or two later, accordingly, we went together to a classroom. This lesson taught me something that I have never forgotten. It has helped me many a time since, and has served to help others.

For the first and only time in my life, up to that period, I made a heroic attempt to pay close attention to a lesson in mathematics. This I had never done before. Having no special love for that exact science, I had ever listened casually. I had gone through all the years of my life up to that date with the fixed impression that I could not learn mathematics.

As the young and zealous scholastic stood at the blackboard and went into the matter of sines and cosines, and other bewildering things, I found that I was actually absorbing knowledge. He elaborated. He went into further elaborations, and to all his words and marks upon the blackboard did I lend an attentive eye and ear. Presently he made a slight mistake. I noticed it, and asked him whether such a sine should not have been a tangent. He looked at me closely and made the correction. Shortly afterwards another slip of the chalk incited me to call his attention to the mistake. Again he looked at me curiously. Thus we went on for about an hour and a half. Finally he made another little mistake, and I pointed it out to him. Then he turned on me and said:



" . . . on the street car I met a dainty little fellow"

"Mr. Finn, I'll teach you no more trigonometry."

"Why?" I asked, rather surprised.

"Because," he answered, "you know your trigonometry and you are trying to put one over on me."

I protested. I told him that all the trigonometry I had ever learned I had learned sitting under him. But my old reputation, coming from my first period in Woodstock, of being a practical joker was still alive. He was convinced that I was playing a trick on him; so my education in trigonometry began and ended with that one session under that kindest scholastic.

But, as I said above, it taught me a lesson. It brought home to me a fallacy too common among young students, the fallacy that, because one does not succeed in a branch of study, therefore it is beyond one's ability. I had gone many years thinking I could not learn mathematics. I knew at the end of that lesson that I could succeed in that study, as in any other, if I only gave it due attention. Many boys start the study of Greek with the feeling that they cannot learn it. To give the loose to such a feeling spells defeat.

Autosuggestion is a dangerous thing. I have seen a football squad defeated before the game began. The players had gotten it into their heads that they could not cope with their opponents; they were defeated before the sound of the referee's whistle. In other years I made use of this experience; and many a boy I put on the road to learning by ridding

his mind of one of those terrible "I can't, I can't" autosuggestions.

My second year of philosophy was a pleasant one. As the months moved onward, my health grew slightly worse. However, I was able to do sufficient study to make the grade. Again I owed much to the charitable help of others. Mr. James Dawson, at present a distinguished professor at Woodstock College, and Mr. Elder Mullan, lately deceased, did much to help me on. Indeed my life's experience as a Jesuit has taught me that my Jesuit brothers are models of charity. Whenever I needed help, they were there to give it. During my first year in Woodstock Mr. John Weir, one of the most charitable men I ever met, was in my room morning, noon and night to ascertain my wants and to give me any sort of assistance.

My old friend insomnia returned to lengthen my nights in this second year of philosophy. I used no medicine to offset this trouble. Instead I had recourse to two volumes written by a very learned German Jesuit on difficult questions of philosophy. The matter he treated was highly metaphysical, and the manner in which he treated it was extremely heavy. Two or three pages of this learned Jesuit's writing generally succeeded in putting me to sleep. One of the things which he treated extensively was "Concerning an Infinite Number." Many a time I went to sleep on an infinite number.

It was the custom in Woodstock at that time to assign partners for a walk on holidays. One morning I found that I was to go out with two other

scholastics, one of whom was a remarkable mathematician. We shall call him Mr. M. This man could give you the square of any number from one up to ten thousand. For instance, if I said, "Mr. M., what is the square of 777?" he would look at me for a moment and say, "I think it is such and such a number." That is, he could in the space of two or three seconds multiply 777 by 777 and give the correct answer. To me he was a wonder.

When, therefore, on this occasion I learned that he was to be my companion in a long walk, I took out my two volumes of sleep-compeller and spent two hours in carefully studying up the whole question of the infinite number. Then I was ready for Mr. M. We started out; the weather was good, the road smooth. Presently I asked Mr. M. what he thought about an infinite number. Was there in an infinite number a contradiction in terms? Could there be an infinite number?

Mr. M., as a lifelong student of mathematics, gave a very serious answer. Upon my word, I don't know today whether he held that an infinite number was a contradiction in terms or not. Nor did I at the time care what opinion he held. I was prepared to take either side and fight him. When he gave his opinion I started in. I knew all the objections against the thesis and in fifteen minutes I reduced him to silence. In fact I rather think that I brought him to the verge of anger. It was good stuff. I doubt whether he ever learned how I had prepared for him.

I tried the same trick on Mr. Elder Mullan, a scholastic who was a marvel in languages. Mr. Mullan was a man who never lost a moment's time. I sat next to him in the class of philosophy, and must humbly own that he taught me how to behave myself. From the moment that the class began until the clock struck a warning note five minutes before the expiration of the hour, Mr. Mullan never moved hand or foot. His eyes were glued upon the professor. He took no notes. He did not need to. He had trained himself to such perfection of attention that what he listened to became his. Mr. Mullan, next to Mr. Dawson, was the best philosopher in the class. His hour in the class was equivalent, I should say, to the hour of any other man plus two hours' study.

I said a moment ago that he did not move until the clock gave the warning signal, five minutes before the end of the hour. Then he changed his position and got ready to move. No sooner was the class over than he was off to his room. There he had an order of time which no one but a hero could live up to. There were fifteen minutes for Latin, fifteen minutes for Greek, fifteen minutes for German, fifteen minutes for French, thirty minutes for Sanskrit. These allotted times are given from memory and are probably inaccurate. But the point I wish to make is this: he had every moment of the day consecrated to some particular study.

Being assigned to walk with him one day, I happened to have at hand some unusually good articles on Sanskrit. Eagerly did I go over them. By giv-

ing them brief but undivided attention, I was ready to converse with Mr. Mullan on that walk. In due time I entered upon the subject of Sanskrit and began to discuss questions concerning that language largely and with much erudition. Mr. Mullan listened attentively for a few minutes; then, turning upon me he asked:

“Young man, what have you been reading?”

My bubble was burst. He had found me out at once.

There came to Woodstock that year a young scholastic from overseas. He was a strange character. In fact I considered him a humbug. He too used to talk largely on many things—art, literature, and kindred subjects. His conversation was of such a nature that the modest young scholastics in his company were generally put to silence. They allowed him to hold the fort unmolested. One day he started that sort of thing with me. I decided that I would humor him. I too began to talk of art and science and literature in the most highfaluting terms. For nearly an hour the two of us talked in the most grandiose manner. The young man never realized that I was humbugging him, but the scholastics who happened to be present did. There was no doubt about it, he was a humbug. Of course he did not last as a Jesuit. He subsequently left the Society.

The third year of philosophy came. Insomnia was still with me, and something of a return of my former troubles. But all in all it was a pleasant year. It was during these two years that I took

up writing again. Being quite ill, I think in the second year, and not feeling quite up to the severe studies then pressing upon me, I wrote "Percy Wynn."

Also in those years I did some work over which, whenever I look back, I cannot but grin. The professor of chemistry was a learned Italian father. It was his custom to write a scientific article for each number of the American Catholic Quarterly Review. Of course, like most of the Italian professors, he was not specially qualified to express himself in English. To my great astonishment he came to me early in the year with his manuscripts, and told me to put them in shape, so that for two years the science articles in the Catholic Quarterly were really from my pen, the matter being the professor's and the writing my own. It made me smile, I say; for, with the exception of one scholastic who is now dead, I believe I was the worst scientist that ever went to Woodstock.

During my second year at Woodstock I began writing and publishing stories for children once more. One of the striking episodes from the story of "Tom Playfair" appeared in the Youth's Companion. Also there arose in Cincinnati a boys' and girls' magazine, edited by two young men who had attended St. Xavier's High School and College. They persuaded me to let them have "Percy Wynn" as a serial for their new paper. And so it came about that when I returned west, broken down after my two years of philosophy, I was very much in the juvenile public eye.

CHAPTER XIV

Two Years in Milwaukee

I HAVE always considered myself a second fiddler. When I was a boy, as I have related, I learned something of the violin, and in due process of time joined the St. Louis University orchestra. I became really a good second violinist. Also I played first violin there, and afterwards elsewhere, but in that position I was never quite at home. As a second violinist, though, I was quite proud of myself. It seems to me that through my life I have been, speaking allegorically, a second violinist. I could always play first at a pinch; but in the subordinate position I was perfectly at home.

Sent to Milwaukee, I was assigned the sophomore college class, called in those days poetry class. This was very sudden. I had never taught beyond the first year of high-school work, and now I was translated from the lowest department of high school to a very important department in college. However, I was not wholly unprepared. During my two years in philosophy I had made Horace's Odes my familiars; I had read and re-read them; I had come to know and love them. As to Greek, I had forgotten much. Nevertheless, the habit of reading the Greek Testament had kept me in some sort of remote preparation.

At the opening of the school I found myself fac-

ing as nice a set of boys as one could meet anywhere. Five of them subsequently became Jesuits, and two or three others became priests. The present Father Robert Johnston, a really fine metaphysician; Father Joseph Kammerer, for many years superior of the British Honduras Mission, also a Greek scholar of unusual merit; Father John Weiand, who has served as rector at Toledo and Kansas City; and Father Joseph Husslein, on the staff of "America" for many years and a distinguished writer on socialism and kindred subjects—all these were members of that class.

It was a pleasure to teach them. They were good boys, and being good, were, some of them, very anxious to have a good time. It was a pleasure to deal with them.

When Christmas time came, I worked them all up to the writing of a Christmas story, and in order to encourage them, I volunteered to write one myself. Before the holidays arrived, all their compositions came in. Many of them were quite good. I read, or told them, my own story, and they were unanimous in agreeing that I had written the best. I dare say that I agreed with them. My story was a hair-raising story. I know that because I tried it out. One night I told this ghost story of mine to the acolytes after services in the church. It was a sleepless night for some of those boys.

On the occasion of a visit to Chicago the acolytes there besieged me for a story. I was only too glad to try this one on them. Once more I banished sleep. Really I think it was a good story. For two

years I told it, and consequently was doing all in my power towards the promotion of insomnia. That story was to come back, as we shall later see.

In addition to teaching poetry and conducting the Marquette College choir I continued my literary labors. Amongst other things I undertook to furnish "The New World," of Chicago, with various chapters taken from my story of "Tom Playfair." After the work of the classroom I would go to my room, take out my manuscripts and try to arrange a chapter for the Chicago Catholic weekly. It was in the doing of this that I made a new discovery. I found out that, for me personally, literary work was next to impossible if I was at all weary. It was a punishment to me each week to correct and put my manuscript in order.

After a few months of this sort of work I made up my mind never to attempt writing unless I felt perfectly fresh. To write a story requires—speaking for myself at least—undivided energy. From that time I kept my resolution inflexibly. Only once did I break it; and when I did, it was, as shall be later shown, with disastrous results.

Also, in my first year of teaching at Milwaukee I got out my first book, "Percy Wynn." I thought I had secured a publisher, but I was wrong. One of the young gentlemen who had launched the Cincinnati Catholic juvenile magazine, which was now dead and buried, undertook to be my publisher. He thought he was a publisher. So did I. We were both badly mistaken. The story came out a tiny volume with gilt-edged paper. It looked pretty, but

abounded in all kinds of printer's errors. It is but right to say that the book was not a success. It was a printed book without a publisher.

I was at pains to see that many of the Jesuits got copies. The reception awakened no unusual enthusiasm. One Jesuit, Father James Connelly, wrote me a very beautiful letter. He praised the book, but thought the story was too long. Several others were kind in their words.

The poetry class had a banner year. One of my boys won the Latin inter-collegiate medal (competed for each year by all the colleges of the Missouri province), and all of them made a good showing.

During that vacation and the following one I was put in charge of the glee club at the villa. Father Burrowes, superior, asked me to take the position. He explained: "You see, we can't get anybody else." I enjoyed that very much. When I came back to Marquette for another year's work, Father Grimmel'sman summoned me to his room.

"You are to teach rhetoric next year," he said. I must have looked amazed.

"You see," he explained, "we can't get anybody else."

As a matter of fact, it had never occurred to me that I had special gifts for teaching rhetoric. Oratory never appealed to me. I did not care to write speeches, much less to read speeches; and the only sermons I have ever enjoyed reading are some written by Cardinal Newman.

Nevertheless the year was a most successful one. It was a great pleasure to have the same boys for another term.

My teaching days as a scholastic were now over, and once more, feeling in fine feather and with high aspirations, I left the west for Woodstock, there to take up my studies in theology.

CHAPTER XV

The Publishers Meet My Heroes

ON THE first of September of that first year of theology I repaired, after a hearty breakfast, to my room, seated myself, and indulged in a cigarette. Then suddenly, between puffs, there flashed upon me a happy thought. That ghost story of mine written nearly two years ago for the boys at Marquette College lay on the table.

Why not, whispered a voice within me, take that little sleepwalker and send him, after the murder of his uncle, to St. Mary's, Kansas, there to join the company of Tom Playfair and Percy Wynn and to gain strength and courage to fit him to meet the villain, Caggett, and solve the mystery of the murder?

At once I seated myself at my desk, took out pen and paper and began writing my longest story.

I was in the prime of life, thirty years of age, and charged with energy, and my pen hurried over the paper with an ease which, looking backward into those years, I cannot but marvel at. For ten days I must have averaged from eight thousand to nine thousand words a day. Also, I played hand-ball, attended an outing, and did many other things that were in no wise concerned with the story of "Harry Dee."

The classes were to open on September 11; there-

fore I must finish my story before that date. On the night of the tenth I had, as I retired to bed, the whole story finished, with the exception of one chapter, that eerie chapter in which Caggett and Harry Dee meet in the haunted house. That chapter was to be the outstanding chapter of the book. I could not sleep for thinking of it. The horrors got into my blood. They came upon me as an obsession. Towards eleven o'clock I arose, turned on my light, and in the dead, solemn silence of the Woodstock night I relieved my soul of its eerie imaginings. Somewhere after midnight my pen wrote the word *Explicit*.

The story was finished. And so was I. For, filled with the emotions of that chapter, I hopped into bed and threw the bedclothes over my head. If the reading of that chapter frightened many a boy and girl reader, it must be said that it began by frightening the author himself. Let me add that before publishing "Harry Dee" in book form I toned down the horrors of the haunted-house episode very considerably. Its appearance in serial form had given several children the creeps.

In the morning following the completion of "Harry Dee," I began my attendance at lectures in theology. There were two of them that day, and I slept very soundly during both. So thus the year began. "Percy Wynn" was in book form, but the book was unknown to the general public. The printer could not be brought to see that he was not a publisher; nor would he relinquish his right to its publication. For over a year I had used every

endeavor to get it out of his hands without a lawsuit; and we Jesuits avoid lawsuits whenever possible. There was no hope of his relinquishing his claim to the sale of "Percy Wynn."

With "Harry Dee" ready for publication and with "Tom Playfair" to be edited for book form, I felt that it was imperative to get "Percy Wynn" under my control so as to be in a position to publish all three under the name of a responsible publisher. What could I do to bring this about?

The answer was simple—prayer. So I prayed and made promises. St. Joseph had got me out of many a hole; I doubted not that he would help me again. After much praying and the making of certain promises, I sat me down and wrote a letter to my printer. I had written before; but this time I figured St. Joseph was with me.

To my astonishment there came a prompt answer. The printer said that he was perfectly willing to return my copyright, that he had always intended to give it back, and that he had the idea that I could sell "Percy Wynn" to some publisher for the dizzy sum of \$150. This estimate caused me to grin, for at that time I had risen to such a conceit of myself as to fancy that the commercial value of "Percy Wynn" would be measured in terms of thousands rather than hundreds of dollars.

Then began my sparring with publishers. Procuring the names and addresses of all the Catholic publishers in the United States, I wrote a letter to each one, sending along with the letter a copy of "Percy Wynn."

Every one of them replied. Several informed me that they had given up publishing Catholic juveniles; nobody wanted them; they did not pay. Other several wrote me that they would be only too glad to publish my book if I would meet all expenses out of my own pocket. Their proposition came to this: "Heads I win, tails you lose." One firm made me an offer which, if taken, would in any case safeguard their profits, and if the book had a good sale, would give them a fine income and myself a few dollars.

The best offer came from Benziger Brothers of New York. Also, they wrote a very intelligent letter; at least, so it appeared to me. They said that for some time back they had abandoned the publishing of books for boys and girls. They had found it a losing proposition; but they would take another chance and see whether "Percy Wynn" would arouse Catholic juvenile literature from the beauty sleep into which it had fallen throughout the English-speaking world.

Their terms, as first offered, did not quite suit me. I suggested a change, and they, brave and daring pioneers, agreed.

So, early in the year 1890, appeared "Percy Wynn," really published for the first time. Behind the appearance of this book was my declared intention and quasi promise to prepare "Tom Playfair" and "Harry Dee" for companion volumes. The outside Catholic world received "Percy Wynn" with open arms. The critics were extremely kind, especially Maurice Francis Egan, Katherine Con-

way, several priests in charge of weekly papers, and a distinguished English writer, whose name, unfortunately, I do not recall.

My Jesuit brethren were not a unit in their acclaim. A few did not consider such work appropriate to a Jesuit. Others thought I would do better writing poetry. However, my Father Provincial, the Rev. R. G. Meyer, and my rector at Woodstock, Father Boursaud, were most encouraging.

So busy had I been in that first year of theology in arranging for the publication of "Percy Wynn," in correcting "Harry Dee" for its serial appearance in "The New World," of Chicago, and in the study of theology, that I paid little attention to a siege of bronchitis which stayed with me during nearly the whole winter.

Spring came and a return of good health. Examinations were held, and the time came when, free of books, we were all to go to St. Inigo's for our summer outing. I remember the day we took the boat from Baltimore. It was a glorious day and I felt gloriously alive. Three weeks of St. Inigo's was a thing to look forward to with pleasure, but beyond that loomed the prospect of preparing "Tom Playfair" for publication in book form—Tom Playfair, who was now over seven years of age.

Our boat was not well out of the harbor when I took up this project. On board the boat was a dear friend, Mr. John Brosnan, professor of chemistry at Woodstock. Thirty-seven years have passed since that day, and John Brosnan—now

Father Brosnan—is still doing business at the old stand, teaching chemistry by profession and incidentally teaching innumerable young Jesuit scholastics the highest lesson of the highest living by a noble example.

Said I, "John, I want you to do me a favor."

To ask Mr. Brosnan to do a favor was like offering candy to a child.

"Surely, Mr. Finn, if I can do it."

"You know, Mr. Brosnan, that I have already published 'Percy Wynn' and should have published 'Tom Playfair' first; but the story is not finished. I did not write it originally for publication, and so it is full of lacunæ. The most important thing is to get in a chapter which will necessitate Tom Playfair's leaving St. Mary's for a short visit to Cincinnati to recover his health. Now I want you to blow Tom Playfair up."

Mr. Brosnan looked startled. I continued: "Of course you are not to injure him seriously, but he must be damaged so as to establish a reason for his being sent off for a few weeks' rest in Cincinnati. You are a chemist. If you can't blow him up, I can't imagine who can."

Mr. Brosnan said he would give thought to the matter during our stay in St. Inigo's. Then I said, "And I will think about it, too."

I remember this last remark of mine as though it were made but yesterday. He was going to think about it and I was going to think about it, too. As a matter of fact I feel as certain as though he told me that he never gave it a thought. Speak-

ing for myself, I know that from the time of my arrival at St. Inigo's until my departure, Tom Playfair's need of being blown up never occurred to me in any shape or form, for, on the second of July, if my memory serves me right, but two or three days after our arrival at St. Inigo's, something happened which changed the whole order of that vacation.

It was the most tragic event of my life. At St. Inigo's it was the custom to have an early supper after which the students of theology and philosophy were free to go boating on the broad estuary which, to all intents and purposes, was the Atlantic Ocean.

On the second of July, after supper, according to our wont, many of us made for the boats; but before we were wholly on our way, there arose a furious storm. The few boats that had gone out returned at once, and those about to start out were abandoned by the prospective rowers.

Rain and wind and storm drove us back to the villa, a wooden structure of three stories, the first story being devoted to our dining hall and lounge room, and the second and third to dormitories. Gathered together in the dining room that night, we indulged in jovial recreation. An entertainment was improvised consisting of songs, speeches, jokes and other forms of merriment. Outside the elements were spending their force. By ten o'clock calm had returned to earth; and in that calm we retired to our dormitory. In a few minutes we were all buried in slumber.

Toward midnight I was brought back to con-

sciousness. There was noise and confusion in the dormitory above me. There was the sound of moving beds and moving feet. Coming to myself, it dawned upon me that the storm had returned. The rain was pattering on the roof, falling to such effect that the water, forcing its way, was dropping upon the beds of some of my brethren in the dormitory above. It was they who had arisen and were now engaged in moving their beds to dry quarters.

For a few minutes I lay half awake and half asleep. I was accustoming myself to the noise above and was about to court slumber once more. Suddenly there was a blinding flash of lightning and simultaneously a terrific clap of thunder. Following hard upon this, there was a crash above as though several men had fallen to the floor.

Father John Wynne, newly ordained, was superior of the villa. With the coming of the new storm he had hastened from his bed and gone to the upper dormitory where the rain had been doing such damage. He had arrived at the door, through which one could survey the entire dormitory. There he paused, and during that pause came the flash of lightning and the roar of thunder.

In that flash, which illuminated every nook and corner of the dormitory, he saw three men who were standing in different parts of the dormitory crash to the floor. Also he saw a ball of fire. He knew that these men had been struck by lightning, and in the very moment that they fell he raised his priestly hand and said aloud, "Ego vos absolvo

a peccatis vestris in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti."

Those three men, one a theologian on the eve of his ordination, another a philosopher just ready to go out and take his place in the classroom, and the third a philosopher just finished with his first year of study, were killed at once. We who survived did not know this; and all that night we kept vigil while many worked madly, vainly, to bring back consciousness to these three young men who were dead beyond recall. It was an awful night. Speaking for myself, I thought it would never pass. With daylight, grateful daylight, the attempt to resuscitate the three victims was abandoned. Two others were seriously injured, one burned so badly that it was thought at first he would never recover.

At noon that day we all assembled in the little graveyard and stood by while the corpses of the three beloved men were lowered into the grave. Jesuits are schooled to train their emotions. It was an extraordinary sight to me and to other Jesuits there to note how little there remained of that fine control we had learned and practiced from our novice days. Many struggled desperately to hide their emotions and many failed. There were sobs and tears. The funeral services were short, but the grief and desolation remained long after these dead men were consigned to their last earthly resting place.

Eagerly we waited for instructions from our superiors. Had we been consulted, I am confident



"... he raised his priestly hand"

that every one of us would, on the first opportunity, have left that place to go—anywhere. But it was in the providence of God that we should remain. It was the decision of the superiors that the vacation should go on as though nothing had happened.

So we stayed; and looking back, I consider our remaining and the way we remained as one of the remarkable things of my experience. I know that, left to my own decision, I myself would not have remained there for any conceivable earthly reward; I am convinced that my feelings were the feelings of all my brethren. But once the word had gone out that we were to remain, we carried on without a word of murmur or complaint. Such is Jesuit obedience. Obedience when it calls upon the heroic gets a quick answer.

Accordingly we went through our allotted time and then returned to Woodstock. It was a cheerful homecoming; we were all glad to get away from St. Inigo's with its tragic associations. But the end was not yet. We had changed our skies but not ourselves. Woodstock was not free from lightning and thunder storms; and when now and then in late July and early August the thunder rumbled and lightning flashed across the heavens, one could see lights appear in one room after another. Very few of us could lie tranquilly in our beds, much less sleep, in the presence of heaven's artillery. Indeed there were several who on such occasions abandoned their rooms and sought the company of some friend, remaining with him until the storm was over.

and gone. I did not belong to this latter class. It was enough for me to light my lamp and read until Nature became calm once more. Also, even when there were no thunder storms at night, I suffered from terrifying dreams in those days immediately following our return to Woodstock. Many and many a time, in my troubled slumbers, did I find myself running for my life to dodge a thunderbolt.

But time, if one has enough of it, will heal nearly any wound. By the middle of August I ceased to dream. I began to feel like myself again; and one morning after breakfast, returning to my room and lighting a cigarette, my eyes fixed themselves upon that bale of manuscript, "Tom Playfair." Upon my word, I do believe, that in all those six or seven weeks following my little talk with Mr. Brosnan I had not once reverted to the matter of revising that story for publication in book form. But on this particular morning the thought came back full force. In the preceding year I had set as the order of business for my summer leisure the preparation of this manuscript for publication. In fact I had all but pledged myself to doing so.

I continued to stare at the manuscript. Suddenly there was a flash of imagination. It was an echo of the lightning flash of the night of July 2. I would transfer the lightning scene from Woodstock to St. Mary's, Kansas. Instead of those noble Jesuits who had met with death on that occasion I would substitute one of the boys attending St. Mary's and allow Tom Playfair to get such dam-

age from the bolt as would make it perfectly proper and natural for him to take a trip to Cincinnati.

It was so easy to change thought into action in those days. In a minute's time I was at my desk, and with unfaltering pen wrote a few more chapters, the chapters concerning the lightning episode, and the thing was done. "Tom Playfair," written for my boys in 1883, parts of it published as episodes between 1883 and 1889, was now in a few hours ready for publication in book form. Begun in 1883, it was finished in 1889.

A few years ago, after a trip to British Honduras, I sat down to write a story, "Facing Danger." In order to do this I was obliged to refresh my memory by reading "Tom Playfair," "Percy Wynn" and "Harry Dee." More than a quarter of a century had passed since, as a proof reader, I had gone over these stories; and I now read them as though they were written by someone else. The reading of "Tom Playfair" brought back memories. I could trace in the chapters the different times and different circumstances in which I had read, revised and edited the story. One thing seemed clear to me—the chapters concerning the lightning incident, written at the age of thirty-one, were clearly superior to the rest of the story, composed, nearly all of it, at the age of twenty-three.

Once I had the manuscript, that ancient manuscript, in shape, I sent it to Father J. P. Frieden, then provincial of the Missouri province.

Very promptly he returned my manuscripts and stamped them with his hearty approval. Also, he

gave me permission to go to New York to visit Father Fagin and get the benefit of his criticism on certain points in the story.

To New York, then, I went. Father Fagin, the best critic of juveniles I ever met, went over the manuscript carefully, suggested a few minor changes, all of which were adopted, and left me, as I thought, free to hand my story over to Benziger Brothers.

But a new trouble arose. The provincial of a certain province, then in charge of a plan to handle Jesuit publications on a large scale—a plan, by the way, that did not materialize—asked me to let him have my manuscript for his inspection. Of course he got it and I awaited his verdict with some anxiety. The verdict came.

A Jesuit father, one of the most distinguished literary men of the United States at that time, waited upon me to give me the Father Provincial's opinion. He wanted the lightning scene eliminated; he wanted Tom's uncle taken out of the book; he wanted any number of incidents cut out that made for fun. In a word, so far as I could judge, he did not want the "Tom Playfair" that I had written. He seemed to have in his mind the idea of a story about a goody-goody boy who was prim and precise and who would not give the idea of an American boy at all.

When the emissary of the provincial left me, I was in dire distress. With a heavy heart I wrote to Father Frieden, my own provincial, and set down the objections that the other provincial had urged.

“What am I to do?” I asked. “If I change my story along the lines set down, it will not be anything like the story I intended to write.”

Then I waited. A few days passed and there was sunshine again. Father Frieden wrote that, as the duly-appointed censors had passed favorably on the book, there was no reason why it should not be given over to the printer; and so “Tom Playfair” finally went into the hands of Benziger Brothers, and within a few months into the hands of the boys and girls for whom I had written it.

It was not received with the acclaim which greeted “Percy Wynn’s” introduction to the public. Some critics said—with perfect justice—that it was not so equal; others, with perfect justice, that it did not hang so well together; and others, that the book had too much slang and was vulgar in parts. One of the leading lights of the Catholic clergy in New York wrote begging me to avoid vulgarity. Perhaps the most curious criticism I received was from a distinguished young Jesuit, who has since done wonderful work in the service of God. I was standing with a number of my brethren at Woodstock when he joined our group and addressed himself to me.

“Mr. Finn, I have just finished reading ‘Tom Playfair,’ and I confess that I am very much disappointed. Into ‘Percy Wynn’ you poured the richness of your experience as a boy, as a prefect and as a teacher. You were writing from the fullness of your experience and your memories. Everything

was so natural, so easy. There was not a forced note in the whole book. But in the writing of 'Tom Playfair' you have tried to 'recapture the first fine careless rapture.' You have tried to do over again what you did so wonderfully in 'Percy Wynn'; but anyone reading this new book of yours can see that you are forcing a note. You are trying by means of forced effort to do what in 'Percy Wynn' you did with wonderful ease. The whole story is strained and unnatural and is a futile attempt to repeat the first success."

When I remarked simply that I had written "Tom Playfair" years before I even thought of "Percy Wynn," he looked astonished, dropped his jaw and walked away to think it over.

All these criticisms, save the last, were true and just. Yet there was something in "Tom Playfair" which, in the years that have followed, brought it to a position where, as I am credibly informed by my publishers, it is beyond question the most successful Catholic book written for boys and girls ever published in the English tongue.

In "Tom Playfair" I undertook to put down once and for all what I considered would give the reader the idea of a genuine Catholic American boy. When writing "Tom Playfair," I had no idea that I would ever write another book—much less that I would write a book for publication; so I put into it what might be my last words on the subject of the American Catholic boy. Nothing was held back for future treatment.

The book was hardly out when it was translated into the German language, in which tongue it has gone through many editions. In 1908 the Portuguese version appeared; in 1910 the Italian; in 1913 the Polish; in 1925 the French, Flemish and Dutch.

CHAPTER XVI

I Am Ordained

MY THIRD year of theology at Woodstock proved to be a difficult year. Bronchitis, so the doctor called it, held me in its grip throughout the winter, and I was otherwise in very poor health. One day, in early spring, my Father Rector, Father Boursaud, called me to his room.

"Mr. Finn," he said, "The 'Messenger of the Sacred Heart,' in Philadelphia, is shorthanded. Two of their men are in the hospital, and they are in need of matter for their coming numbers. Couldn't you write something for them?"

Father Boursaud did not know at the moment that he was speaking to a very sick man. I had not had a book in my hand, in the way of study, for some time. A literary man himself, Father Boursaud was one of the best friends I ever had. He had encouraged me in my various writings and given me valuable advice.

"Father Boursaud," I answered, "I would be only too glad to do anything you asked, but give me an hour or two to consider the matter and I will give you an answer."

In due time I returned to the room and said that in my present condition and place I did not think I could do any writing of any sort; but if he would give me permission to run up to Phila-

delphia for a week or two, I thought that change of climate, of diet and of manner of living might put new life into me. Father Boursaud rather liked the idea and got into touch with the provincial of the New York province and received the proper permission.

Accordingly, to the great scandal of one of my professors and, no doubt, of many a fellow-student, I left Woodstock for Philadelphia one bright morning to devote my best for a week or two to the "Sacred Heart Messenger." Father John Wynne was in charge. All my hopes were realized. In new environment I became another man and at once proceeded to write stories, news, and other matter with a facile pen.

Taking advantage of my stay in Philadelphia, I went to see a doctor, a specialist, to try to find out what was really the matter with me. The specialist was a very nice young man with great faith in his own knowledge and apparently with no faith at all in God. He went about his examination in a very modern and up-to-date way, after which he informed me that I had a clear case of Bright's disease and would have to spend the rest of my life on a milk diet. I was not prepared for this startling bit of news and voiced my astonishment and my difficulty in believing that this fatal malady had me in its grasp. The doctor was like a fighting cock.

"You doubt my statement, but there can be no doubt. See here; go to Dr. Blank, an eye specialist. Let him examine your eyes and he will tell you the same story."

Insisting that there could be no question about the disease, the doctor dismissed me. Although he consoled me with the assertion that I might live many years if I stuck to a milk diet, I did not feel especially exhilarated as I made my way back to St. Joseph College. I felt that I had been sentenced to death. Also, I must humbly admit that I had a good appetite, liked a good meal, and never drank milk save in the consumption of coffee and of tea. My future prospects looked dreary.

Whenever Providence sends me a facer I generally turn to God in prayer. I certainly prayed hard that night, and my prayer was that the doctor might eat his words. Prayer and fasting are powerful things; and along with my petitions to God began my milk diet.

The next day I went to see the oculist. He too was a man who firmly believed in evolution, and had his doubts, if I understood him aright, about the existence of God and other simple truths. For all that he was of a nice temperament. He told me that the symptoms of Bright's disease had so far not shown themselves in my eyes, but that my eyes were in a most terrific condition. He pointed out to me that, unless I gave up study at once and stopped reading and lived my life in the great outdoors where a man's a man, I would go blind in a short time. And there was no "maybe" about all this. He was as firmly convinced of my ruined eyesight as the other doctor was of my incurable disease.

I went back to St. Joseph College and stuck to my



Father Finn at the time of his ordination

diet and persevered in prayer. Oh, that Doctor No. 1 might eat his words! If I remember aright, I put myself in the hands of St. Joseph, my heavenly doctor. No doubt I made some promises. So for some days I prayed and fasted. And then I returned to the doctor who had sentenced me to the drinking of milk for the rest of my natural life. I gave him the report of the oculist, which he did not like, then, once more, in the most tactful way I could put it, insinuated my remaining doubts as to my having Bright's disease.

The doctor rose to the occasion. Once more he began his examination. He had not gone far, when suddenly he faced me.

"Have you followed my diet strictly?" he asked. I assured him I had.

"Well," he said, "I don't want to take any credit to myself; this thing is too remarkable. Today you haven't the least sign of Bright's disease. All the symptoms have disappeared. It is a most remarkable case."

Then he bade me farewell and enjoined me at the last moment to stick to the milk diet. I bade him good-by, and with that farewell to him went the diet of milk. When I returned to the college, I resumed my regular meals, which I ate with a new relish. As to my eyes, from that day to the day of my ordination I never used these to better effect, studying, reading and writing without intermission.

My prayer was heard. Was it a miracle? Was it a direct answer from God? All I know is that

the doctor did eat his words and that I did not give up my studies and did not lose my eyesight; that some thirty-five years have since passed and that my eyes, all these years, have continued to do their duty and that Bright's disease has not captured me yet.

During my stay in Philadelphia, I wrote several of my best short stories, did a great deal of editing, and returned, finally, to Woodstock with the nearest thing to good health I had experienced in two years.

In fact, after doing no studying at all, I became an intense student and did more work in theology in two or three months than I had done in the previous year and a half. However, I had not yet learned temperance. I was something of an extremist. Hardly had I begun my review for the third-year examination when excessive study brought on me an attack of insomnia. Sleepless nights begot muddleheaded days. My greatest asset in an examination had been a clear head, but the clear head was gone. How I got through the third year of theology is a puzzle to me to this day. Anyhow, I managed to pass—just.

Then came the retreat and ordination to the priesthood; then orders to return to St. Louis, there to make my fourth year of theology.

I left Woodstock a wiser and a sicker man, and took my way westward with three published volumes to my credit—"Tom Playfair," "Percy Wynn," "Harry Dee"—and another story, "Claude Lightfoot," ready for the publisher.

CHAPTER XVII

Varied Employments

MY FOURTH year of theology was perhaps the most successful year given to my studies. At any rate I was in good health throughout the entire time. During that year I put on flesh, going from 165 to 195 pounds. I did not know at the time that I was really making a swift recovery from tuberculosis. Six years I spent in Woodstock, three in the study of philosophy and three of theology. In all these years I had been in bad health.

In these later years I have often wondered that I had a single friend there, for I showed myself at my worst. I think that into my six years at Woodstock I packed more of what is disagreeable than I did into all the other years I spent in the Society. And yet everyone there treated me with the greatest kindness, and it was my privilege to meet with very remarkable and lovable men. While everybody was willing to help me, it chanced that the men who did most for me were men of a strange province. Father Charles Macksey, Father James Dawson, and Father Elder Mullan were three men who really put themselves out to help me along the rugged path of learning; and these men were students and scholars of unusual distinction. Father Fagin of the New York province and Father Shallo of California, two of the finest critics I have ever

met, went out of their way to help me and encourage me as a young writer, while John J. Wynne, S. J., in many ways the most remarkable Jesuit of the United States, proved to be a real inspiration by his wise advice.

There were other noble characters whom I met among these men of other provinces; and the wonder to me is that, being what I was, they showed me so much kindness, remaining in after years true brothers and loyal friends.

Looking back at Woodstock, I think that I was all the better for being thrown into contact with so many remarkable men. Returning to my native province, I was happy in knowing that I was to be associated once more with the older Jesuits who had taught me and with the younger ones with whom I had spent my first days in the Society.

I was sent to make my fourth year of theology *privately* at St. Louis University. And oh, what a relief it was for me to be free at last from the lecture room! At Woodstock, during my studies there, I had sat under professors of philosophy, of theology, and of morals, averaging, I suppose, about three hours a day; and I had reached a point where I was surfeited with lectures. I have never cared to sit quietly and listen for an hour or more to the average or even to the good talker. In general, lectures leave me cold.

Early in May, if I remember aright, I faced the board of examiners for my final examinations. Luckily for me my head was clear and the examiners were most affable. Two hours sped on without

a hitch to the last two minutes, which were devoted to finding out what I knew of the natural sciences. Now, what I knew of these branches could be made patent in about two minutes. Without hesitation, I told my examiner what I knew, but I felt sorry for him. He was groping in the dark. He couldn't hit upon a subject about which I could talk with any degree of intelligence. As a matter of fact I had made no preparation on the natural sciences. Hence, some time later, when the Father Provincial told me the results of this examination, I was rather amused and in no way surprised to learn that while I had passed my examinations creditably, the examiners were of the opinion that I should not be set to teaching the natural sciences. I informed the provincial that they were perfectly right and that I had no desire to teach what I knew nothing about.

Forthwith I was sent to Detroit to do some odds and ends of work and to rest up after my course of studies. The city of Detroit in those days was a small town; the automobile had not yet come, and Mr. Ford was tinkering at a thing which is now known throughout the world.

My first assignment was to preach in the church. I remember how carefully I wrote that sermon and how earnestly I endeavored to commit it to memory. The sermon was good, I believed. But so far as I know it made no impression on anybody. A little later I was called upon to preach again. This time I wrote most of the sermon but made no attempt to memorize it. The effect of my preaching was

slightly more pronounced. Finally, one afternoon I was called upon to preach at a few hours' notice. Into the pulpit I went in due time and delivered myself of ideas which I had hastily gathered in the course of an hour or two. Then it was that a member of the congregation came to the parlor to see me and to tell me what a wonderful sermon I could give. However, I did not think that I had any special gift of oratory. Also, I know that my best attempts, as described above, did not teach me my lesson.

Meantime, I gave many hours to the writing of stories. It was during the months of June, July and August that I composed seven or eight of my best short stories.

For the following school year I was sent to St. Mary's, Kansas, to teach the class of rhetoric. It proved to be a very happy year. There were about fifteen boys in the class, and I quickly discovered that I had an unusually strong influence over them. In fact I seemed to have a sort of hypnotic power in dealing with that class. They were full of life and in general were considered difficult to handle. In the senior division they gave more trouble than all the other boys put together. And yet, in the classroom, they were docile beyond belief.

I made several experiments with them. For instance, entering the classroom with a very severe air I would start the regular hour's work with every appearance of gloom and desolation. Within a minute or two practically every boy in that class looked as if he were thinking of committing suicide.

I should add, however, that one or two did not seem to be particularly affected. Gradually my features would relax and a smile would come. Another smile or two and the class began to hold up its collective head once more, as though, after all, life might be worth living. Relaxing a little more, I released whatever sunshine I had in me, and the boys, so gloomy a minute before, became as cheerful and gay as a group of negro children at a watermelon picnic.

Once, when I was a scholastic and went to teach in a new place, one of the boys encouraged me by saying: "Mr. Finn, you can run the boys here because most of them like you." I am convinced that one of the greatest arts of a teacher is to get the sympathy of the students. Of course sympathy is not enough; they must also respect you. They must, in a certain sense, fear you. During my years of teaching I always began my year by laying down a few laws and insisting on their being carried out. I began by insisting upon my own authority, making no apparent endeavor whatever to gain the good will of the boys. However, once they understood what I wanted and what I insisted upon, the good will and the sympathy came.

One of the first laws which I set before them was this: no boy in the class was to speak, was to whisper, show open signs of inattention when I was explaining anything. I enlarged upon this. I explained that I could not make my point clear if I was distracted by the antics of even one student; and generally I ended with "I am Sir Oracle, and

when I speak, let no dog bark." Also, I told them that this was not a matter of punishment. I did not propose to punish a boy for inattention; I was simply determined not to tolerate him.

Now boys, as I know them, are very reasonable. If they really know what you want, they will obey you. In connection with this I shall never forget an incident that occurred while I was teaching a class of humanities some three years later in Cincinnati. There were forty-six boys in the class, and a lively set they were. I had laid down very carefully my Sir Oracle principle, and the boys seemed to have grasped it. However, one morning it happened that I was explaining with much pains certain difficulties in connection with the Latin translation then before us. In the full glow of my explanation a boy of about sixteen suddenly turned around to the student seated behind him.

"Bill," I said (by the way, his name was not Bill), "turn your face this way and keep your face this way until I am through."

Bill blushed, looked stricken and readjusted his person as I desired. Then I continued. Presently he turned around again. Then I suspended further teaching to address myself to poor Bill. I gave him a genuine lecture. I was severe, merciless. When my scolding was finished, I noticed that Bill seemed to be utterly crushed. The silence of the tomb came over the entire class and that silence was maintained until the end of the hour.

While carrying on the work of that particular class hour, there was another line of thinking going

on in my mind. Could it be that I had made a mistake? The boy, on the face of it, had seemed to be disobedient. To all appearances he had deliberately done the thing which I had ordered him not to do. But there was his face; there was his expression. Face and expression seemed to indicate sorrow, shame and deep humiliation.

As the class went out for recess I stood at the door; and as Bill passed by me I caught him by the arm.

“Wait one minute, Bill,” I said.

When the other students had departed, I turned to the distressed-looking youth.

“Look here, Bill,” I said; “I wonder whether I made a mistake—I thought you were deliberately disobedient.”

“No, Father, I wasn’t. I—I—I—really didn’t know I turned around.”

I looked at Bill. Truth was shining in his eyes.

“Perhaps,” I suggested, “you are a very nervous boy.”

“Yes, Father, I am.”

All at once the whole situation became clear to me.

“Well, Bill,” I said, “I see clearly I have made a mistake. I am sorry, and I am going to make it up as well as I can.”

When the class assembled after recess I made them a speech, telling them that I had made a grievous mistake in the way I had spoken to Bill, that Bill was very nervous and that a seeming act of disobedience was involuntary on his part. I pub-

licly asked the boy's pardon and expressed my regret for all that had happened.

The consequence of this speech was immediate. The boys brightened up and seemed to show that they appreciated my endeavor to be fair and square. As for the boy himself, he turned out to be one of the very finest pupils of that class, came to me with all his troubles and was one of my best friends. For the rest of the year I remained the undisputed Sir Oracle; and as for Bill, he is today one of the most distinguished young Jesuits in the province of Chicago.

In dealing with boys, as I suggested before, it is very necessary that one should not only be just but that he should also seem to be just. Boys have the keenest sense of justice. Give them fair play and they will overlook ever so many faults in their teacher. So far as my experience has gone, I am inclined to believe that boys have a much finer sense of fair play than their sisters. No doubt a boy's games have much to do with this. When the lad of seven plays his first game of baseball and the cruel umpire says, "Three strikes; you're out!" the budding youth rebels. Like as not he throws down his bat, refuses to play, and sulks for the rest of the game. However, as the days go on, he quickly comes to understand that baseball is not a matter of favor but of justice. There is nothing like that, so far as I know, in the training of girls.

There was another event which happened that year that I shall not easily forget. There was a very nice boy in the class who, unfortunately, was

anything but clear-headed. He had many gifts, but among them straight thinking was lacking. It was after the first set of examinations. In English rhetoric he had received from me sixty per cent. out of a possible hundred. He came to see me privately. He was indignant and felt sure that an injustice had been done. I told him that I would go over the matter carefully and let him know.

The next day, at the beginning of the English class, I announced to the class: "One of the boys has told me I was not fair to him in judging his standing in the English rhetoric examination. Now, boys, I try to be fair. In fact, I tried to strain a point and give him as much as I could.

"So I'll tell you what I am going to do. I am going to let you boys be judges yourselves. I will repeat the questions given in the competition and read the answers as found in your book of rhetoric, and I will allow you to judge how many notes to give for each answer."

The class was intensely interested.

"Here is the first question, and if answered correctly, it is good for ten notes."

I then read the question and the correct answer.

"Here is the answer of the pupil," I added.

"Now," I continued, "having heard his answer, how many notes would you give him out of a possible ten?"

Some said two, others three, others four.

"I gave him eight notes," I said.

In this way I went through the entire examination, with the result that at the end every boy in

the class was of the opinion that I had been far too generous. This was true of the boy himself, who came to me privately afterwards to acknowledge that I was right.

Now all this I had done to make the boys feel that I wanted to be fair and that if I failed at all in fairness it was on the side of mercy.

Sometimes a joke is the best snub. During my last year of teaching there was in my class a regular Cassius, with a lean and hungry look. He loved to ask me questions. Moreover his perverted sense of humor prompted him to put questions which he hoped would cause me more or less confusion. Since I understood him, he really gave me no trouble; and on one sweet day he gave me an opportunity for payment in kind.

“Father Finn,” he asked, “are the Jews still looking for the Messiah?”

“William,” I answered, “I believe that many of the orthodox Jews are; but the rank and file are looking rather for the profits.”

That put the quietus on William for at least a week. He is now a Jesuit, doing excellent work, and with a pronounced sense of humor.

CHAPTER XVIII

Leisure to Write

IN THE year 1899, if I remember rightly, Father Joseph Grimmelzman was made provincial. I was teaching in Cincinnati, and one of the changes was to take me out of the classroom and make me what is known in the Society as a "scriptor," that is, a writer. Coming from so high an official, this was a rather solemn recognition of my attempts to reach the public by the printed word. It is also to be noted that it was the first time my superiors ever gave me an opportunity to devote myself exclusively to the work of authorship. I had already published eight books, but these books were composed in times of sickness or during the summer months, in which the scholastic had no stated work. To have the whole year to myself for writing struck me as being a wonderful thing.

However, when I came to facing the situation, I discovered that things were not what they seemed. It is true I had no classwork. On the other hand I was chaplain at the Baum Street Convent, said mass there every morning, visited a number of the sick, and held interviews at that place with various nurses and nuns.

In addition to this, I was given the Sunday-evening lecture in the church. I remember the first lecture very well. Ascending the pulpit I found my-

self facing a church filled from doors to sanctuary with as fine a congregation of men and women as one could desire to see. And now let me make a confession. After the first few lectures the crowd began to dwindle and to dwindle, until finally I had only a fair audience. I have no excuse to offer. The fact remains that I failed as a pulpit orator. I was no *Jupiter tonans*. So far as I know, I was a fairly good extempore speaker and interesting enough to hold my audience when I delivered a simple address in a conversational tone.

There were other occupations which took up much of my time. I was one of the confessors in the church and heard from fifteen thousand to twenty thousand confessions each year. This work I found very exhausting. I was also assigned to give lectures on literature to the postgraduate class of St. Xavier College. In a word I was not in an ideal position to spin romances for my American boys and girls.

Long before, as concerns myself, I had discovered the ideal conditions for literary productivity. To give my pen wings, all I needed was a vast leisure, with nothing to do and nothing to worry about. Looking back on the books I had written I discovered that they had all been written when I had nothing to do. I had come from the juniorate to St. Mary's with some little reputation as a writer. My brother scholastics had come to expect some original work from my pen. But at St. Mary's, from the time of my arrival until two and one-

half years later, when I departed, I was too busy. I had no leisure.

Going thence to Woodstock, Maryland, I was free of duties for the first time. My time was my own. I realized how glorious it was to be free. And there, in the leisure enforced by illness, I did my first short stories. The insomnia of those early years gave me another sort of leisure, the leisure of sleepless nights; and during that leisure I composed my first long story, "Ada Merton." When my poor health at St. Mary's made the continued prefecting and teaching impossible, I was given the easiest work ever assigned me as a Jesuit, and, thanks to that leisure, I could write "Tom Playfair."

Just to show how important this leisure was to the success of my writing, I remember that while I was in Cincinnati as a teacher, the first enthusiastic letters from boys and girls concerning "Tom Playfair" reached me. Surely they were enough to spur me on to more writing; and yet, when at the end of the hard day's class I sat down to write or revise, I found my pen difficult and my imagination barren. I could not change or correct, much less create.

But at the end of a leisurely vacation I was able to write, almost in a single burst, the story of "Harry Dee," and during the vacation that followed my first year of theology I wrote "Claude Lightfoot." "Ethelred Preston" flowed from my pen during a two months' rest in the little town of St. Charles, Illinois, and every vacation at the villa

saw, either during the course of it or just at its close, another novel or another series of short stories ready for the publisher.

Even after my ordination, when vacations are supposedly at an end, I obtained permission from my provincial, Father Thomas Fitzgerald, to go to the villa at Waupaca, in the hope that the quiet and seclusion of that place and the vast leisure going with it would once more awaken my dormant imagination and furnish me the material to write another book about Claude Lightfoot as a football player. My hopes were well grounded. Once I had settled down to the villa leisure, with boat anchored in some secluded nook and eyes fastened on my fishing rod, my imagination began to flower. Within three weeks I had material for a book that is still popular, "That Football Game."

But this was the real end of my leisure. From that day on I was by way of being a full-fledged Jesuit priest. During my period of tertianship at Florissant (our year of noviceship following ordination) there was no leisure, no chance for writing. It is true that during that year of study and prayer I got the plot for two stories, one of which, "His First and Last Appearance," I wrote three years later and the other after a period of over twenty years. But I actually wrote nothing.

In those early years of my priesthood in Cincinnati I found no leisure. And though, after two years of teaching in the college department, I was set aside as a scriptor, confessions, preaching in the church, care of a very large sodality, and all man-

ner of odd assignments which fell to me left me no leisure to give my imagination play.

In fact, at the end of two years as a scriptor, during which time I wrote "His First and Last Appearance" and "By Thy Love and Thy Grace," I told Reverend Father Provincial that I would prefer to have regular work and take my chance for writing during the summer months, provided I were allowed to have my summer months free for that purpose.

The provincial thought that an excellent plan; and accordingly I was, in 1901, put in charge of St. Xavier School, a position which I have held for twenty-seven years. My good Father Provincial overlooked one point; he gave me regular work for the school year but made no provision to let me have the summertime for literary work, the result being that for twelve long years I was so busy with the financing of the school and other kindred matters that writing became for me apparently a lost art. One play, "The Haunt of the Fairies," was the single product of my pen in what should have been the most fruitful years of my career as a writer, and this play was conceived and dashed off during an eight-day retreat, when perforce I had nothing to do beyond praying and meditating.

In the meantime my publishers were urging me to write. They pointed out how, if I failed to get out a book from time to time, the books already published would fall off in their sales. The strange part of the matter is that the sale of these books did not fall off. What touched me most, however,

was the cry of the boys and girls from north and south and east and west, all little Oliver Twists, begging by word of mouth and by letter for more. Once or twice, during a week or two of the vacation months, I made an attempt to write, but with no result. My imagination refused to stir.

As the years went on, I began to wonder whether it would ever be possible for me to write again. Going over the matter carefully, reviewing my past efforts at story writing and the conditions under which I worked, it gradually dawned upon me that possibly, with a return to the old conditions, I might once more do the same sort of work. All my writing had been done when I enjoyed six or seven weeks of uninterrupted leisure. But, after taking St. Xavier School, I had never had so much as even three weeks. All the while a great number of Jesuits were urging me to take up my pen once more. In fact some of my superiors were interested. Well, after twelve years of literary inaction, I made up my mind to try once more. Accordingly, I presented myself one day in the early fall to Father Rudolph Meyer, my provincial. It was Father Meyer who had approved of "Tom Playfair," and who had unwittingly inspired me to the writing of "Percy Wynn." I said:

"Father Meyer, I don't know whether I am written out or not. I don't know whether there is another book in my system. Sometimes I suspect that there is. Now, if there are any more books for boys and girls in me, I would like to get them out. Looking back at the circumstances under which I



" . . . the cry of boys and girls . . . begging for more"

wrote my other stories, I have come to the conclusion that if you gave me permission to go away from Cincinnati at the end of the school term, and allowed me to remain away until about the middle of August, I might succeed in getting out a book. I should like to go to a place where I am not known, a place where there is water for swimming and fishing and rowing, a place where I would have plenty of solitude and silence. How about Prairie du Chien? My idea would be to loaf religiously for three weeks, fishing, rowing, swimming, sleeping, reading poetry. If three weeks of that sort of thing fails to arouse my imagination, there will be no book. However," I added, "I have a feeling that such a course would not be in vain. Suppose you let me try it."

Then said Father Meyer: "Very good, very good. I should not be surprised if there were something in what you propose. Now, suppose you were to go through this year with your school and sodality work as usual, and then, when vacation comes, if your Father Rector could see his way clear, you ——"

Never distinguished for suavity of manners, I broke in and spoiled what promised to be a fine speech by Father Provincial.

"Excuse me, Father Provincial," I interrupted. "Don't put any ifs in the matter. Leave it to my Father Rector and he will always find work for my idle hands. No. You simply tell Father Rector that at the end of the school year I am free to go away until the middle of August."

He laughed. I laughed. In fact the matter seemed to be settled. But it was not. A few months later Father Meyer died very suddenly. A new provincial, Father Burrowes, was installed, and so the matter had to be taken up once more. When Father Burrowes visited us in Cincinnati in the early spring, I put the whole case before him again. As I understood him, he gave his approval. June came and I was eagerly waiting for my assignment to Prairie du Chien. No such assignment came. Instead there came a list of priests who were to give retreats, and there I was as if I had never spoken to the provincial; for the one thing I had insisted upon was that, if I was to write a book during the summer, I was not to give a retreat.

This assignment rather puzzled me. I wondered if there were not some mistake. Consequently I wrote a short letter to Father Burrowes, going over briefly what I had said to him with regard to the summer program and asking him whether or not this retreat assignment was in answer to what I had told him. There came a prompt reply. There was a mistake. I was not to give a retreat. I was to go forth to Prairie du Chien and remain there for the whole vacation if I so desired.

So to Prairie du Chien I promptly traveled. Think of it! For twelve years I had not been free of care and responsibility for so much as a week, and now I was once more a free man, with nothing to worry about. At that time I was in my early fifties and quite resilient. Father George Kister was rector of Campion College; and he, like the

dear old friend and brother he was, did everything in his power to make me welcome. He seemed to know just what I wanted. Instead of giving me a room in the community house, where I would have been surrounded by the Fathers and brethren living at the college, he picked out, in the new dormitory building, vacated during the summer by the boys, a great, big room on the fourth floor and at the farthest end of the building. It was an airy room, with plenty of breeze and no end of sunshine. It was a room so set that it gave me an opportunity to indulge in solitude, a thing denied me for many a year. I had brought along with me a number of books to read, books that would titillate my imagination.

My daily order was quickly arranged. Mass at six-thirty; breakfast at seven-fifteen; and then leisure until noon. I spent the morning in my room devoting it mostly to reading. After dinner and recreation I once more went to my room and took a postprandial nap. About three-thirty down I went to foregather with a few of my brethren for a swim in the Mississippi, just a stone's throw from the gates of the college. After the swim came supper, and then the most delightful part of the day. Father Kister and Father James Daly and I took possession of a boat and made our way out on the river into the sunset. The evenings at Prairie du Chien had in them the charm of fairy-land. The sunsets were at times gorgeous beyond description. And the conversation of Fathers Daly and Kister was leavened with the charm of friend-

ship and beautiful thoughts beautifully expressed. In a word, those sunset excursions on the Mississippi are one of the brightest memories in my life. We kept them up for several years. On a later return to Prairie du Chien (if I may anticipate a little) the Young Ladies' Sodality presented me with a canoe, which was the very thing to add the last touch of perfection to the boat trips inaugurated during my first year in the north.

As my reader may recall, I had stated to my provincial with perfect sincerity that I did not know whether I could write a book again or not. It would all depend upon whether my imagination, granted the same opportunities as in early days, would react. And so, for the first week in this new manner of life I wondered whether the urge to write, with something to write about, would return. That wonder did not last very long. Before the three weeks were gone, memories of my past twelve years in St. Xavier School began to bestir themselves to an activity which gave me no chance to doubt. There was a story formulating itself in my head, and indeed, before my three weeks of complete rest had expired, I had my plot and characters and my story. More than that, "The Fairy of the Snows" was written with ease and pleasure; and when it was finished, I discovered to my great delight that I had a plot and characters and events for another story, which I wrote the following summer under the title of "That Office Boy."

So, as it turned out, my theory was correct; give

me leisure and at the end of it I would find a story. "The Fairy of the Snows" inaugurated my third period of writing; and in this period I have composed over half of my books.

As the years have gone on, I have found it more and more difficult, first to get the idea of a story and, secondly, to get myself down to write. Up to the age of sixty or thereabouts three weeks of rest were sufficient for both purposes. I remember, for instance, when I addressed myself to the writing of "Facing Danger," that, although I had a plot in my head, I could not get my pen to function in the old style. The three weeks had passed, but I could not make a start. Then I tried various sorts of writing, but to no avail. I simply could not get down to work. The fourth week passed, and with the end of that week I felt forced to take some stand. So I gave myself three more days. On the following morning, going to my room after breakfast, I threw myself upon my bed and fell into a restful slumber. About half-past ten I awoke; and it was a real awakening. I felt like another man. I wanted to write. I felt like writing, and so, going to my desk and seizing my pen, I wrote the first chapter or two of "Facing Danger," and from then to the end of the story my pen never paused.

Later on, addressing myself to "Lord Bountiful" I found the same difficulty. The story was with me, but the mood to write was not. One morning, in a fit of desperation, I sat down and said, "I will

write." It took me an interminable time to write a page. There was something wrong with me. It had always been easy for me to write at the rate of one thousand words an hour, but on this occasion I was hardly capable of three hundred. Having completed the first page, I looked at it and there came over me a wave of disgust. At the same time there arose in me a fear that I should not be able to write the book at all. I threw the page of manuscript on my table and abandoned all thought of further work that morning. Dinner came, recreation, and the nap, from which I awoke at about three o'clock. Once more a change had come. Once more I was my old self. Picking up the manuscript of the morning, I tore it to pieces, the first time I ever did such a thing. Then I made a fresh start and before supper time had completed two chapters of "Lord Bountiful." I finished them with the feeling that the story was as good as written. And so it proved to be. From that day until the end my pen ran with its accustomed ease and speed.

And now let me come to the tragedy of my years of writing. It came about because I deliberately violated my own principle, which was never to undertake the writing of a story unless I felt that I was fresh and at leisure.

The Reverend Father General learned from the superiors of my province that I had an idea I could write an Irish story. The writing of it, however, called for a trip to that country, where the Black-and-Tans were conducting a sort of war with the

Irish people. Father General very kindly gave his consent. The trip was to cover the months of vacation.*

** Editor's Note.* This passage is unfinished. It was one of the last chapters written by Father Finn. Obviously, however, had he continued this criticism of his own book, he would have mentioned "On the Run," his story of Ireland, as the book which was written without the inspiration and leisure that he felt was necessary for his work. The unfinished passage is left in because it evidences the ability of Father Finn to appraise his novels. He did not like the book, and he was frank enough to want to tell his readers that he did not like it. In some ways that makes it of particular interest to readers. They will want to see the book which the author admits was written under unnatural pressure.

CHAPTER XIX

Thoughts on Authorship

A WRITER finishes his book and throws it out upon the world. Then, naturally, he sits back and wonders what good it will do. In the most unexpected places he later on comes upon evidences of the good that it has done, and his heart is made glad. But no good ever otherwise done by my books has given me half the joy that has come to me from the fact that boys and girls have thought of the religious life and the priesthood because they read some novel of mine.

I recall, for instance, one June day when I arrived in Montreal. There are two Jesuit houses in the city, one occupied by English- and the other by French-speaking Jesuits. Not knowing the difference, I picked out the French house, where the provincial dwelt. A strange thing happened during my stay of twenty-four hours at this college. Invited by some newly found friends in that hospitable city to take a ride through the town, I noticed in the parlor, as I passed out, a young man who had called to see the provincial. The brother porter explained to me that this young man had just come in, announcing that he wanted to become a Jesuit. When I returned from my drive, my stock had gone up in that community more than one hundred per cent. The provincial had examined the young

man carefully and had found him in every way suitable as a candidate for the Order. It seemed that he had never met a Jesuit, so, quite naturally, at the end of the interview, the provincial asked him how he came to think of becoming a Jesuit.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "I read all of Father Finn's books; they gave me the idea of becoming a Jesuit." In my enthusiastic dreams as a young writer such a thing had never occurred to me.

Once while staying at the Jesuit house in Santa Barbara, California, I was informed that a certain Franciscan Father attributed his vocation directly to the reading of my stories.

The fact that God seemed to use my books as instruments for promoting vocations impressed me very profoundly. I concluded that the more my books circulated, the more vocations would result. One day, therefore, I presented myself to Father Xavier McMenamy, at that time provincial. During the war the price of my books had gone up above the dollar mark. I was receiving a generous royalty on each copy. Putting the matter before the provincial I said:

"Father, I did not write to make money; nor is it our business primarily to look for money. Now, what I propose to do is this. When I go to New York this summer, I want to strike a bargain with Nicholas Benziger. If he will reduce the price of the books, I will, with your permission, cut down my royalty."

Father Provincial most graciously gave his consent though it meant that in all likelihood his in-

come for the education of the young Jesuits in his care would be cut down.

A few weeks later I was on the train, bound for New York. One thing I liked about a railroad trip was the chance it gave me to enjoy a little solitude. During the early hours of that morning I reveled in my privacy. Noontime came and with it dinner in the dining car. So far, I had not been obliged to engage in conversation with a single person. After leaving the diner I entered my smoker, where I met a young Catholic priest. I have unfortunately forgotten his name. He was a member of an order or religious congregation I did not know. He was in charge of a high school in New Jersey. We talked of many things.

Finally we stumbled upon the subject of boys' books and spoke of Finn. Possibly I betrayed myself. At any rate he suddenly asked me whether I was any relation to Father Finn.

"Your name," he went on, "is Father Finn, is it not?"

I told him I was no relation to the author. His face became blank.

"In fact I am Father Finn himself, and a man cannot be related to himself, as you know."

Rarely have I seen a man so startled. He was simply carried away. And then he avowed that in his boyhood days he had read and re-read Finn and that he attributed to the reading of my books his call to the priesthood and to his religious order.

Such incidents gave me new courage. They made me feel surer than ever that I was doing the proper

thing in forcing down, if possible, the price of my books to the dollar mark.

I remember well my interview with Mr. Nicholas Benziger, one of the best friends I ever had. I loved the old gentleman. True, we had many a fight. However, after falling out we always "kissed again with tears." When I made my proposition to him, surrounded, if I remember aright, by his three sons, there was a look of joy upon his features. He thought it was a wonderful proposition and said that he would give it immediate consideration. And so he did. The books went down to one dollar once more and remained so for several years.

Strangely enough, the reduction in price did not produce a proportionate increase in sales. It was rather discouraging to the publisher, who eventually brought the price up again.

While I am on the subject of my authorship, I think I owe it to the large army of boys and girls who read my works to answer certain questions which they have been firing at me for the past twenty-five years.

Are my stories true? When asked this question I generally answer that a true story is a story that is not true. If it were really true, it would not be a story. This answer seems to be rather confused, but it is a fact that a work of fiction is apt to be ruined by too close an adherence to fact.

To illustrate what I mean, I remember my attempt to write "That Office Boy" at Prairie du Chien. The book was a study and, to some extent, the story of my little friend Peter Duffy. He was

my first office boy. Before writing that story of him, I married him at St. Xavier Church in the month of June, having at the time the intention of writing him up during the weeks of July and August. And so I did. But when I had finished the story I was not satisfied. There was something wrong, but I could not put my finger on it.

There was at Prairie du Chien that year my very dear friend and brother Father James J. Daly, S. J., the best critic I had ever met, with the exception of Father Fagin of New York, prematurely deceased. I submitted the manuscript to him without comment. He returned it a day or two later saying "I read it. I guess it's all right." His voice was not reassuring. I did not feel that the matter was settled. Nor was it. Two days later he called upon me and asked me to take a walk with him. I fancy it must have been an ordeal for Father Daly. But taking his courage in both hands, he proceeded to tell me that the story was all wrong. When I replied that I was glad that he had expressed his views, he went on to show me how the story failed to hang together. All at once I saw a light.

"Father Daly," I said, "I've got it. You have opened my eyes. I knew there was something wrong, and now I can put my finger on the trouble. I have stuck to fact too closely. Also," I continued, "I have the solution."

Then in a few words I explained to him how I would change one or two incidents, which would involve no more than the rewriting of a part of a chapter. Father Daly seemed to think that I had

the solution. So, taking up the manuscript again and giving an hour or two to rewriting, I had the story ready for publication, and, in my judgment, it was very superior to the original draught.

Are my stories true? There is another answer. All my stories have a foundation in the actual. An incident here taken from real life, another incident there, a remarkable boy or girl: these and a thousand other things have contributed to the building up of a story. Let me give an example to show how a short story, one of my most popular stories, was built out of a single event in the life of a Boston schoolboy.

One day while I was pursuing my studies at Woodstock, my dear friend Father Macksey came to my room. "Mr. Finn," he said, "I have something for you out of which I think you could make a story."

Then he went on to tell of an altar boy who was to serve a midnight mass in Boston. The altar boy was a heavy sleeper. Somehow or other his mother got him out of bed, dressed him and sent him off to serve the mass. She thought the boy was awake. Very probably he was not. He wandered about the streets of Boston until he came to a lighted house. Going up the steps with some sort of dream impression that this was the church, he rang the bell. He rang it again and again. Presently there came down the stairs an old gentleman fuming with rage. The irate man threw the door open, and seeing the little fellow, proceeded to discharge upon him the violence of his wrath. It was a long speech and

it was charged with abuse. Before he had finished his oration, the boy became wide awake. As he listened to the rolling periods of invective, he wondered what he should reply. Finally the old man, possibly out of breath, came to a pause. It was the boy's turn.

"Say, mister, what did you get in your stocking?"

And with this question he turned and flew down the steps and did not cease running until he found himself sanctuaried in the church in which he was to serve.

Now that episode furnished me with a story which has had a big sale. It is entitled "The Wager of Gerald O'Rourke."

One of my friends and critics at Woodstock read the story. He came to me and said he liked it extremely well except for one passage. I asked him to which passage he referred, and he told me that it was that remark of the boy to the angry old man, "Say, mister, what did you get in your stocking?"

I laughed and informed him that that was the only thing in the whole story that was actually taken from life.

The best short story I ever wrote is entitled "He Kept It White." The plot of this tale was suggested to me by a wonderful sermon on mortal sin given during one of my retreats at Woodstock.

The story of "Claude Lightfoot" was suggested to me by some of my studies in moral theology where it was pointed out under what circumstances a layman could touch and even administer to himself the consecrated Host.

Are my characters taken from real life? If I answer this question in the negative, young readers are badly disappointed. If I answer it affirmatively, trouble begins at once.

As a matter of fact, I believe that most writers do, in a certain sense, take the characters of their stories from persons whom they have met. A painter finds it extremely difficult to paint a picture of human beings without using human models, though he does not as a rule try to reproduce the human model feature for feature and line for line. So, when one is writing a story, one has in the back of his mind the picture or memory of some definite person. Sometimes he creates a character out of two or even three different persons. For instance, when boys and girls have asked me who Tom Playfair was, I have told them that he was a composite character, that I had come in contact with several extremely nice boys and, uniting their traits, I produced Tom Playfair.

A few years ago I received a letter from a former Sodalist of mine. She had gone West and wrote to me because she thought the news she had would amuse me. It certainly did. She informed me that she was living with the mother of Percy Wynn.

The heroine of "The Fairy of the Snows" is composite. She is made up of two entirely different girls, one of them a friend of mine who had a flair for dancing, and the other a girl whose father, when out of work, was very, very good and when he was drawing wages was drunk and destructive. Both of these girls have turned out wonderfully well.

Are my stories true to life? Let me at once plead guilty to the charge of idealism. I take boys and girls as I find them and, holding sufficiently close to their ways of speech and action as to give verisimilitude to the story, I try to point out how matters might be, how matters could be, if boys and girls lived up to their ideals. Between realism which follows life to the letter and idealism which seems to resemble life very little there is a middle ground, where men and women seem to talk as they talk in real life and seem to act as they act in real life. This manner of writing we find in Thackeray, in Dickens, in George Eliot and, generally speaking, in the best masters of fiction.

This manner of writing does not give a false view of life. Rather, it inspires one to be his best self, which is also his real self. As a matter of fact I have met boys and girls in real life who have done the brave and heroic things credited to them in my various books. I have met Jesuits in real life (and I am meeting them every day even now) who are doing such heroic things day after day as I would hesitate to put into the pages of a romance.

As I have shown in the present chapter, one of the things which astonished me in connection with my books was the effect they had upon boy readers in the matter of vocation. When I began writing for American youth, I had a sufficiently pretty conceit of myself to feel assured that they would like my stories; but in the highest reaches of my conceit it never occurred to me how these stories of American boys would appeal to the universal boy. My

books have gone into translation in the principal languages of Europe. They are read by French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Czecho-Slovakian and I don't know what other nationalities of boys.

And here is the amazing thing: The boys of all the various nations seem to like my stories. Unsolicited testimonials have reached me to the effect that they are as popular in France, Italy and in various other countries as they are in the United States; and I receive letters from boys and girls from the various nations of Europe, South America and Australia, all to the same effect. My bibliography, compiled through the courtesy of Benziger Brothers, and found as an appendix to this volume, will show by the number of translations and printings how these books appeal to boys and girls of every nation.

CHAPTER XX

The Little Flower Library

WHILE we are still on the subject of books, I must jump ahead from the idea of writing books to the idea of distributing them.

About every twenty-one years I have had what I conceived to be a big idea. At the age of twenty-one my big idea was: "The Catholic American boy is as good and as interesting as any boy in the world. If I can put the Catholic boy before the public, it will do no end of good." The result of that idea was "Tom Playfair," with the other volumes which immediately followed; and that idea, as I have pointed out, led up to a success beyond my wildest dreams. That idea has led to a new school of writers in Catholic fiction and brought about a number of vocations to the religious life and the priesthood.

Twenty-one years later I conceived the idea of a free parochial school. That parochial school, my main work for so many years, I will write of in another chapter.

Twenty-one years after the free-school idea came my idea of the Little Flower Library.

Remotely, the idea came from a visit and a chance acquaintance. During my stay of ten days in London Father Keating, editor of "The Month," brought me to visit a famous American who had

been appointed consul to Morocco in the time of President Cleveland. When Cleveland went out of office, the consul betook himself to England and there carried out an idea which had been in his mind for years.

He established at Bexhill-on-the-Sea a remarkable circulating library. This library was intended to serve the whole of Europe and, to some extent, the rest of the reading world. There were no dues, no extraordinary charges of any sort. The only thing required of a person wanting books from this library was that he should pay the postage.

At the time of my arrival in England this library was most flourishing. The gentleman and his wife and his daughter, the entire family, composed the library force. Their work was a labor of love and as is not always the case with labors of love, was free. The library, for the most part, was built up by the personal donations of the librarian. He told me that he occasionally received donations. The library was wonderfully well chosen. The books were, many of them, classic, and so far as I can remember, practically all orthodox. It was a wonderful collection. That library, I regret to say, has passed out of the hands of its founder and is no longer functioning as it did in his day. It cannot be called a failure. No work so nobly designed, so generously carried out, can be called a failure. The Bexhill-on-the-Sea library will remain a memory to inspire noble souls to other noble deeds.

I spent the night as the guest of this remarkable American. I remember some details of my room,

especially the bed. It was a bed which to my great joy was equipped with a bed light. I expressed my feelings concerning this equipment, and my host gravely remarked that every decent bed should have a bed light. We agreed. To add to the joy of that night he was good enough to lend me a copy of one of Thackeray's great novels autographed by the author and with a few marginal notes from the same hand. For forty years I have been a lover of Thackeray, a really great genius who was not handicapped by a lack of common sense. That night I enjoyed an hour or two of conversation with the writer whom I considered the greatest of all novelists.

Before I fell asleep, I asked myself what were the benefits of my host's library. Of course I realized that it was a great and wonderful enterprise, but I had the feeling that in some way its purpose was vague. My thoughts on this subject sent me to sleep admiring and wondering. Father Keating and I returned to London the next day. This short trip was one of the most eventful of my stay in Europe. Also, it was the beginning of what I considered my great idea.

A year or so afterwards there was a new development. In the football season of that year our St. Xavier football team went to Athens, Ohio, to meet the warriors of the State College at that place. It was my luck to have the privilege of going with them. Athens made an impression on me. It is the site of a famous agricultural college. The city is a very old one. I saw buildings there that had

existed for over a century, a very long time in the United States of America. There was a Catholic church there, an ancient church; there was a council of the Knights of Columbus. But there was no Catholic school; there were no Catholic books in circulation. In fact the only Catholic books in the public library of the town were a set of the Catholic Encyclopedia, which had been donated by the Knights of Columbus.

There were many Catholic boys and girls there. But they knew little of the glory and splendor of our faith; they knew little of our great men and noble women, of our snow-clad virgins and red-bannered army of martyrs. They were Catholics without traditions.

We gave the Athens athletes a good walloping and entrained for Cincinnati that evening, very happy. But, happy as I was over our splendid victory, there was in me a feeling of sadness and of longing. In thinking of Athens, Ohio, I was thinking of thousands and thousands of towns and villages throughout the United States. Our country abounds in Catholic men and women, boys and girls, who have never seen a Catholic book, and who never will unless we other Catholics take steps to change conditions. No wonder that we suffer from bigotry. No wonder that at the present moment, October 1928, one of the greatest citizens of the United States is threatened with the loss of an election to the presidency for the simple reason that he professes the Catholic faith. My day at Athens was

another step towards the carrying out of my big idea.

About eight months passed. Spring had come. I had been called to St. Louis to attend an important meeting of some of the older Jesuit Fathers of the province. There I met Father Spalding. He was in great glee. He had written another book, and he thought it was a good one. I am glad to say that I agreed with him. Also, he had projects for still another book. Then I met Father Gross. Father Gross too had written another book. My spirits went up. I myself had something ready for Benziger Brothers.

I need hardly say that, from the time I began writing, one of my keenest interests had been the advancement of Catholic juvenile literature. Many and many a time I have met good Catholic men and women who have pooh-poohed the Catholic juvenile movement. Some people will talk with respect of Catholic poetry, Catholic history, essays, or novels; but for the juvenile there is simply a lifting of eyebrows. They do not distinguish between the effect of a book on the impressionable mind and its effect on the unimpressionable. They do not realize the importance of that saying, "Catch 'em young." Anyone who has had to deal with men and women for a long period knows what an extraordinary influence a good book often has upon the impressionable child. On the other hand, give the adult the best of books. He may admire it; he may be transported by it; but, for the most part, it leaves him as he was.

Hence I have never had the least desire to consecrate my pen to the older readers. As the years went on, after the publication of my first books, it gave me solid comfort to notice that other writers were entering the field which I had invaded. First came Father Spalding; then Father Copus. A few years later an English Jesuit entered the field with two or three excellent stories for boys, Father Garrold, S. J.

In a word, Catholic juvenile literature, practically given up by the publishers at the time that I published "Percy Wynn," began to advance by leaps and bounds.

To return to that day in St. Louis. On the heels of Father Gross's and Father Spalding's joyful news there came a telegram from Benziger Brothers in which I was informed that a new writer, Father Holland, S. J., had supplied them with a new book and would I please go over the proofs and write my impression of the story. Another increase in the family. I felt like the father of a bouncing baby boy.

Of course I accepted the assignment. The manuscript came at once and I read it through with chortles of joy. It was an excellent story. Its reading put me into a sort of ecstasy. The field of Catholic juvenile literature was now assured of attention. There were fine writers for boys and equally fine writers for girls. Clementia, a Sister of Mercy in Chicago, was for the fairer sex a host in herself.

Finally came what I thought was my great idea.

Looking over the ground, seeing the large number of good books written especially for Catholic boys and girls, taking into account the number of hale and hearty writers ready and glad and able to produce more, I saw the one great difficulty. In this great country of ours I could vision (with Athens, Ohio, before my mind) towns, villages, hamlets and cities with their thousands of wonderful little boys and girls craving just the kind of books which these writers were producing. But between those boys and girls and those books was a gulf which had not been bridged. How were we to bring them together?

I evolved a scheme which was simplicity itself. I would found a circulating library on the plan of the one I had seen in England. I would select or have selected the best and most readable Catholic books for the young and send them to young readers north, south, east and west. A very simple plan; but there were some difficulties. First of all, I had grown old and lost some of my former energy; so I concluded that I would try to interest others in my idea.

Accordingly I began by going to my Father Provincial and proposing my idea to him. He very kindly gave his approval; and I, as I left the room, wondered how, where and when I could have the idea materialized. I tried it on the Knights of Columbus. I saw my dear friend Mr. Flaherty, then at the head of the order. He was very kind and attentive but a little fearful of taking it up. A year later I went to Chicago, where the Knights

of Columbus were assembled, and tried to interest them in my plan. They were very courteous, but they evaded the issue. They wanted me to try it out myself; or rather, they wanted me to get the Cincinnati Councils to take the matter up and finance it themselves.

Turning from the Knights of Columbus, I put the matter before Church Extension, of Chicago. Of course they considered it a very good plan, but they feared to undertake its execution. Finally, in desperation, I took it up myself. I gathered two or three thousand dollars from friends and bought one hundred titles, twenty copies to a title, of the best Catholic books for children. I threw myself on the public.

But alas, this Little Flower Library, as I have called it, was born a child of my old age and, as it happened, at a time when my health was suffering a breakdown. There were excellent articles concerning this Little Flower Library in "America," "Extension," and in many other magazines; but no one seemed inspired to help along. I remember sending out forty or fifty letters to wealthy Catholics throughout the country, and there was one answer. To carry on a library like this, one must have a salaried librarian; one must buy new titles and new books. All this requires money.

As a matter of fact I have been able to carry on; but my treasury has always been low. Hence it has been impossible to branch out, to reach all the corners of the country; and yet the Little Flower Library is not a failure. Its books have reached,

I dare say, over a hundred thousand Catholic children. Only within the last few days, as I write this, the library has sent packages of fifty books to a dozen little parish schools in out-of-the-way places where there is no such thing as a Catholic publisher or a Catholic library.

In the very first year of the Little Flower Library's existence a group of boys in a southern town, having benefited by the reading of the books sent them, suddenly changed all their plans and instead of going to the state school made their way to different Catholic colleges. Letters of appreciation and encouragement come in every day; but they are from poor Sisters without means and from poor boys and girls who express their keenest gratitude for the privilege of being allowed to become acquainted with Catholic literature.

Somehow or other the Little Flower Library has managed to carry on. Somehow or other there is always a little money in the treasury. But as matters stand today, the future of this library is far from assured. Unless men and women of means come to the rescue of this plan to furnish our Catholic boys and girls with high ideals, the Little Flower Library will go the way of the library at Bexhill-on-the-Sea.

In any event, something has been done. Many communities, inspired by the example of the Little Flower Library, have started modest libraries for their immediate localities and a new interest has been shown in Catholic juvenile literature.

CHAPTER XXI

New Work in Cincinnati

I MUST now go back to the events that preceded and followed my coming to Cincinnati.

The Reverend Michael J. O'Connor was rector of St. Xavier College in the year in which I was making my tertianship at Florissant. Father O'Connor was good enough to think highly of my ability. He was of the opinion that I was just the man to secure for the college in Cincinnati. So it came to pass that when I had finished my tertianship I received orders to report to him.

Thither I went with a light heart. Little did I realize that in going to Cincinnati I was entering upon a field which would be the scene of all the activities of my subsequent life. My first year was given to teaching in the class of Humanities, called in these later days the Freshman college class. In addition to this assignment I was made confessor in the church, professor of Christian doctrine in the higher grades and lecturer in the postgraduate class.

All this was in 1897, thirty-one years ago, and I was yet to enter upon the prime of life, being but thirty-eight years of age. My health was very good; and I think I can say with perfect truth that I worked very hard. In fact, by midyear, something had to be done to give me breathing time. Accordingly, by my own request, I was relieved of

the work of the confessional and, thus relieved, was able to do the studying and research necessary for my professorial duties. I might add here that in the following year I was sent back to the confessional and retained as a regular confessor for over twenty-five years—retained, in fact, till my health made it imperative for me to be withdrawn.

I might here add, speaking for myself, that I have found the work of the confessional the most difficult work of the Society. It is very exhausting; it is a strain on the nerves; and I had to do most of my confessional work after the strain of a regular day's work. We heard confessions in those days regularly on Thursday and Saturday, afternoon and evening, beginning generally at three o'clock. On Thursday I came directly to the confessional from the classroom, where I had spent the whole morning and afternoon.

During the first golden twenty-five years I was capable of putting a tremendous amount of work into every day. In my second year at St. Xavier College I was assigned the Rhetoric Class, returned to the confessional, was put in charge of the Sodality, and continued in the postgraduate class. It was a very happy and busy year.

Then something happened which gave a new turn to my whole life. During my first year as a scriptor I was put in charge of the Young Ladies' Sodality, at that time the most flourishing organization connected with St. Xavier Church.

The Sodality came to me in a most flourishing condition from the hands of Father Kuppens, S. J.,

an old missioner who, broken down in health had devoted himself for the preceding two or three years to the building up of this organization. Father Kuppens was a remarkable man. In the strictest sense of the word he was intense. What he did, he did with his whole heart, his whole soul, with all his mind and with all his strength. Crippled by rheumatism, and therefore unable to do much more, he limited his efforts to the Young Ladies' Sodality. He had a gift for detail. He was willing and able to think out everything that was necessary to build the Sodality into a most efficient organization. I happened to know that even during the still hours of the night, as he lay sleepless with rheumatic pain, he thought out various schemes for getting the best results out of the membership.

And how those members loved him! They were devoted to him, although, singularly enough, they feared him too. A man of strong will, when he wanted something, he got it. Furthermore, being a man who gave profound thought to the matters he was interested in, he knew exactly what he wanted. In him, therefore, was found a strange combination of qualities. He was so extraordinarily devoted to his work that he won the love of all; and he was so intense in doing it that if one did not know the love the Sodalists had for him, one might have concluded that he ruled by terror.

I must be frank enough to state that, when I was appointed director in his place, nobody wanted me. In fact the Young Ladies' Sodality wanted Father Kuppens and nobody else. But while they did not

want me, most of them remembered the retreat I had given them two months' before, which was something in my favor.

On receiving the appointment from Father Rector, I asked him to give me faculties to bring the sacraments to sick sodalists and to marry and to bury members of the Sodality. He told me I could have every faculty he could give me, so that, if possible, I might begin my directorship without serious trouble. Whereupon I put on my coat and hat and sallied out into the town.

I was determined to beard the lion in his den. Straightway I went to the leading officers and leading members of the Sodality. These interviews were all rather difficult. The members were pledged to do various things—to do enough, in a word, to disrupt the Sodality. However, I used the policy of the lamb, getting the principal members to promise that they would take no action of any sort until vacation was over. That delay would give me four months to allay the sorrow caused by the loss of their beloved former director.

Well, I lost only one member; but she returned and is now functioning as an excellent sodalist. There were at first a few black looks and a few intemperate words. Also, during these four months, and in fact during five or six months more, I felt that the Sodality was watching me as a man under suspicion. In any event, within two years, the members came to put their faith in me and the organization grew and prospered as it had never grown or prospered before. Naturally, therefore, I came to

depend upon the sodalists for help; and so, when I was appointed principal of St. Xavier School, my first petition, after receiving the appointment, was that I might be allowed to continue as director of the Young Ladies' Sodality, my reason being that, with them to help me, I felt quite sure that the work of financing the school would be made quite simple.

For twenty-eight years and more I have had charge of this remarkable organization. It has never failed me. Most remarkable of all, the members of twenty-five years ago or more who were then leaders of the Sodality remain leaders today.

I remember distinctly that in my early experience with the Sodality an old sodalist gave me a long dissertation on the women-folk who made up our organization. The gist of this speech can be put into two short sentences: They look like kittens, but they are really cats. Wait and you will find them out.

Well, I have waited and waited these many years. I have dealt with those sodalists in sickness and in health, in poverty and prosperity, in big and in little undertakings; and I am happy to state that the high estimate which I had come to form of womanhood in my early days, when my mother and my aunts were ever before me, has never changed. Of course I know that there are bad women. I have met them; I have dealt with them. But I thank God that in these my later years I can see in the Catholic Sodality girl and in the Catholic woman consecrated to God something very beautiful

and uplifting—the character and mark of the Blessed Virgin which their love and devotion to her has put into their lives.

Pleasant as was the work of the Sodality, it added more to the burden of my day. There were at that time in the Sodality many sick sodalists. To take care of them, to see to their needs temporal and spiritual, took up much time. Also, having been put in charge of the Sodality in May, there devolved upon me the task of carrying on the most important work in charge of the Sodality at that time—the care of the booth and the dining room at the St. Joseph Orphan Asylum on the occasion of the annual picnic on July 4.

From that time on there was no further question of writing. Without being a pastor, I had all a pastor's work. However, I was again appointed scriptor for the following year; but it meant very little.

My period as scriptor ended abruptly the following year, when, to my great astonishment, I found myself head of St. Xavier Parochial School. This, with the Sodality, gave me the fullest possible working year. Also, the vacation days, which were to give me leisure for writing, began with the orphans' picnic on the Fourth of July (which, according to our traditions, was an elaborate affair demanding very heavy preparations) and were cut up by an eight-day retreat in July or August given at some big convent or academy, and by my own eight-day retreat. In a word, during the next twelve years, spent happily in Cincinnati, I was busy all the time

from September to September. Can you see why my imagination grew sterile and my pen was as "idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean"?

From the start the Sodality had grown. Its membership had increased by forty per cent. In fact we were nearing the thousand mark, when our onward progress was arrested by a change in circumstances. First of all, the finest part of our parish was cut off. Secondly, the pastors in the different parishes began organizing Young Ladies' Sodalities. Lastly, our parish itself, owing to the march of improvement and the business trend of the city, began to go down rapidly in the number of families. But all the while, the school occupied my energies more than anything else. When St. Xavier School was put into my hands, I found some things very unsatisfactory. There was a splendid new building; the classrooms were fine and large; but the fourth floor was a waste of space, being so built that it could not be used for any purpose. There was no heat, no light and no water for this part of the building, and the flooring was so frail that, to be made use of, it would have to be rejoisted.

Now what I wanted was a hall, and that was the place for it. It took two years to make this clear to my provincial and my rector. Finally I got permission to collect money for the equipment of St. Xavier Hall. The money came in quite rapidly and began to accumulate. Then to my astonishment came that dear friend of mine, Nicholas Walsh. The St. Xavier attic was divided into three parts, with space enough to make three halls, each open-

ing into the other. With the money quickly collected, I established one hall. Mr. Walsh came over one day to see what I was doing and told me to go on to the second and the third. While these halls have proved invaluable for our parish suppers, card parties and entertainments, they have also been of the greatest importance to school activities.

And this brings me to a new phase in the history of St. Xavier School.

CHAPTER XXII

The Free Parish School

IN CONNECTION with the Little Flower Library I mentioned that every twenty-one years I have had what I conceived to be a big idea. The second of this important trio of ideas was concerned with the St. Xavier Parish School, of which I suddenly found myself director.

Here I was, a man who up to that moment had been a teacher and college man, now of a sudden put into what is generally considered parochial work. I had a staff made up of Brothers of Mary and Notre Dame Sisters, a new parochial-school building, a large student body, and the usual financial worries. For the very first time in my experience I was to deal with finances. This was more than a new experience. It was almost a new life.

As soon as I took over the work, I began at once an investigation into the money situation of the school. The children, it appeared, were for the most part in poor circumstances. They were supposed to pay twenty-five cents a month for tuition. Also the Sisters of Notre Dame, who had charge of the girls' department, had generously donated their services to the teaching of St. Xavier children. And yet, upon investigating the matter, I found that the school was a drag on the parish. In fact the parish, at that time, was supposed to

be miserably poor, while the college had the reputation of being comfortably fixed.

The obvious thought for me was to make the school free and to depend upon the good will of the Catholic parishioners and friends to supply the sinews of war. Thereupon I called meetings of men, meetings of women, meetings of special friends and advisers, and debated the matter with various Jesuits. Many said it would be a good thing. Many doubted it. A few said it would be a success for a year or two, just because it was something new, but that it could not be kept up. This last was the common and best considered opinion.

But I was young and reckless. Throwing caution to the winds, I announced that the school would be free and then proceeded to form a school association. First of all, I selected a Board. Mr. W. C. Wolking was president, Sir Richard Crane, Knight Commander of St. Gregory, treasurer, Thomas J. Mulvihill, vice president, and Thomas F. Maher, secretary. They were the pick of the parish, these four men, and right nobly did they come to my help in the first two or three years.

We had frequent meetings, and we all (I forgot to say that I, of course, was moderator) threw ourselves into the work. I was a ready letter writer in those days and my letters reached the best prospects in our parish. It should be mentioned here that the new school, by reason of its equipment, was a far more expensive affair than its predecessor, which had cost the church five thousand dollars every year, the said five thousand dollars being the

amount of actual expenses. But now, what with more teachers and higher pay and the cost of a very expensive heating plant, it was estimated that the yearly expense would be at least nine thousand dollars.

The question before me, then, was how to gather in that sum of money every year. On the face of it, it looked formidable. But I had something to fall back upon. There was my Young Ladies' Sodality.

The Young Ladies' Sodality did not fail me. Many became members of the School Association. But there was another way in which they brought me great financial aid, and that was through a system of weekly euchres, lasting from late September or early October until Advent, resuming after Christmas and running until Lent, and finally continuing from Easter until the arrival of the vacation time. These euchres began in 1901 and are continuing to this day. Other organizations did their share in helping them on, especially, of later years, the married women of the parish. But it is really to the Young Ladies' Sodality that we must give the credit of being the main factor in beginning and carrying on a system of entertainment during all these years.

In addition to these card parties the Young Ladies have, for the past twenty years or more, organized a Thanksgiving affair which has brought thousands into our school.

There was a third way in which the Young Ladies' Sodality came to the assistance of the

school. A good many years ago I thought out a scheme for Lenten sacrifice. In the course of my dealings with the Young Ladies' Sodality it had been borne in upon me that during Lent many sodalists abstained from candy or from the theater or from sweets or from pastry or from several or all of these things. But I also learned that when Lent was over they had saved quite a nice sum of money, which they spent on exalted celebration. This method was very much after the fashion of the Christmas savings methods encouraged by banks. There was but very little of the supernatural in it.

Why not, I asked myself, get these sodalists to make their sacrifice a holocaust, a whole-burnt offering? So, gathering my sodalists together for a special meeting, I explained to them my idea of a Lenten self-denial which really meant something. Why not get together, I asked, and set aside money that would else be spent upon luxuries in Lent and apply it to some fixed charity?

The young ladies seemed to be struck by the idea. For the first year we elected to try to start a foundation for St. Xavier School. The Sodality was in point of membership a big Sodality then, and all its members enthusiastic. In order to increase their interest, I got a dear friend of mine, Mr. Nicholas Walsh, to promise me that if the Young Ladies' Sodality contributed seven hundred dollars he would add seven hundred more.

As a matter of fact they brought in eight hundred; and this sum, along with the check of seven

hundred dollars from Mr. Walsh, gave us a start of fifteen hundred dollars for the St. Xavier Foundation. Today that foundation is over one hundred thousand dollars. Let me add that the Lenten Self-Denial Fund is still functioning. Fearful, a year or two ago, of calling too much upon the Young Ladies' Sodality for help, I was minded to drop this fund, but they insisted upon its continuance.

During the years, since the first Self-Denial Fund, the Young Ladies' Sodality have established a five-thousand-dollar room in the Good Samaritan Hospital, a perpetual scholarship of fifteen hundred dollars at St. Xavier College, have sent several large sums to various missions, have contributed four thousand dollars for the erection of two wards at St. Mary's Hospital. For the coming Lent, 1929, they are going to finish, I confidently believe, the foundation of a burse for eight thousand dollars for the perpetual maintenance of a novice at the new Jesuit novitiate at Milford, Ohio. They have been working at this for the last three years, and no doubt, were it not for my attacks of sickness which force me to seek a southern climate during the winter, they would have already completed this burse. Well, we have adopted measures this year which will assure its completion, whether I am able to remain in Cincinnati or not.

So, then, relying upon the Young Ladies' Sodality with their euchres and other help, and encouraged by a number of the wealthy Catholics who contributed generously in the beginning, St. Xavier School became, as I have been told, the first free Catholic

school of Cincinnati. During the first four months I worked with all my energy to insure sufficient money to carry on.

Little did I know at that time of the criticism leveled at me by those who knew me best. Some of my friends said: "Father Finn is anything but a business man. What can you expect? He can write good books, knows how to write the stuff that will take with boys, but in six months St. Xavier School will be on the rocks."

This estimate was, I have reason to believe, the common one. I was in blissful ignorance of this opinion, and when, one day, the head brother came to my office and told me my provincial in St. Louis had remarked casually there that he was going to stop my free school and make it a pay school once more, I was extremely surprised, not knowing what to make of the rumor. I think it was in the December Parish Calendar of that year that I made my first financial statement. Of course it never occurred to me that this statement would create a sensation. But it did. It had hardly appeared, when the pastor, my dear friend Father Van Krevel, came to my room.

"Father Finn," he said, "I want to congratulate you on your fine report. It is wonderful."

"What is wonderful?" I asked, completely puzzled.

"One thing is sure," continued Father Van Krevel, not noticing my interruption. "You are going to shut up a whole lot of people. They have



Father Finn, friend of children

been talking for three months and now they will stop."

And then it came to me that my friends, real friends too, convinced that, being a romancer, I could not be any sort of business man, had been patiently waiting to see me and my school go into some sort of bankruptcy. When, in the spring of that school year, Father Provincial came to Cincinnati, I asked him whether he had remarked in St. Louis that he was going to abolish the free school I had established.

"Oh," he answered, "it will remain a free school as long as you are in charge of it."

I am sure it never occurred to Father Provincial, much less to me, that I was to remain in charge for twenty-six years and more.

It is a wonderful thing to be surrounded by good Catholic people. If you only let them know what you want, and if they see that what you want is reasonable, they will go any length to help you along. In all these years while I have been in charge of St. Xavier School my people have never failed me; and never since I published that first school report have I had the least worry about finances.

Although the School Association was founded on the supposition that I would have to collect and expend seven or eight thousand dollars a year, the sum required has gone much higher with the progress of time. First of all, though the Notre Dame Sisters continued to give us three or four teachers for nothing, we began to pay the other Sisters sup-

plied us four hundred dollars a year. Higher salaries were given the Brothers of Mary. I fancy that they now receive twice as much as they did in the first years. Running expenses have all been higher since the war. Thus it has come about that instead of the original estimate of seven to eight thousand dollars a year the School Association now pays out fourteen to fifteen thousand dollars.

I am a poor business man. To keep up an affair like the School Association is rather out of my line. I am apt to mix accounts, lose track of payments, and in other ways to get things into a bad tangle. In addition, as the years went on, I noticed that ever so many who began by contributing twenty-five cents a month as members of the School Association ceased to keep up their membership. The first interesting novelty was gone. Also, there were a number of men and women who gave donations of fifty to one hundred dollars. These donations came to a stop.

Thinking this matter over, I saw a plan which fired my imagination. It struck me that if I could get people to contribute a hundred dollars in cash or in installments, I could accept it as a perpetual membership. The sum of one hundred dollars, I explained, would not be spent. No, it would be invested, and the name of the donor would be properly entered in the record. I was careful to point out that such donors would never lose their memberships. Dead or alive, rich or poor, good or bad, they would retain their membership; so that as long

as the School Association endured, weekly Masses and prayers would be said for their intention.

My announcement of this perpetual membership produced an extraordinary effect. Many people who would never have thought of paying twenty-five or fifty cents a month were attracted by this proposition; and perpetual memberships were recruited from men and women whom, to my astonishment, I had never seen or met.

I have been much touched by the self-sacrifice and generosity of perpetual members. For many years past it has been the same story. People come to my office to see me. On admitting them I am introduced to good Catholics who happen to be strangers. Sometimes they are in narrow circumstances; and sometimes they tell me that they have been working, saving and scraping for many months in order to complete their subscription. So great has been the result of these perpetual memberships that in the past ten or twelve years I have done nothing at all to promote other subscriptions.

The St. Xavier School Association, as I write, is now practically endowed; that is to say, while there is not enough money invested for full endowment, the perpetual membership prospects are so good that, without further effort or solicitation, they will come in of themselves and complete the required fund.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Commercial Department

THE first thing that struck me in the girls' department of St. Xavier School was the fact that it had ten distinct grades. Next it was brought home to me that while the lower grades were crowded and overcrowded, the upper grades were very roomy. If I remember aright, the seventh, eighth and ninth grades were all in one classroom, and that particular classroom had plenty of vacant seats. On further inquiring, I ascertained that the ten grades began with a primary grade (which meant anything), going next to the first grade, and finishing with the ninth grade. Total: nine grades plus one primary grade. The division did not impress me. Looking further into the matter, as the days went on, it was borne in upon me that there was nothing to attract the girls to attend the upper grades; and so it had come about that every mother's daughter who could get away from school in the fifth and sixth grades did so, nearly all of them going to work in factories.

The situation did not please me. I gave it thought, and then set to work to get my superiors and the Sisters interested in the plans then formulated. The task was not simple. It took me some time to get my superiors to approve my plans. Then I went to the superior of Notre Dame Convent.

This Sister was an extraordinary woman. She had everything that goes into the making of an ideal superior. You would imagine, therefore, that when I put my plan before her it would receive full approval.

“Sister,” I said, “we have now in our girls’ department nine classrooms, each classroom a grade. In my plan, we will continue to have nine classrooms, and each classroom a grade; but we will call the first classroom the first grade instead of the primary, and each succeeding classroom will be numbered progressively until we reach the eighth grade. There will be two classrooms left, and the first will be called the first-year commercial, and the second the second-year commercial.”

“Oh, Father,” remonstrated the superior, “we don’t like the idea of our little girls going out into offices and working as stenographers, typists and bookkeepers. It is such a dangerous life.”

“No,” I answered. “We have succeeded very well in keeping them out of that kind of work; but this city is overrun with girls and boys whom we have fitted for factory work. There are dangers, great dangers, Sister, in factory life too. Also, we have succeeded in so arranging our studies that our girls leave us at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Now this is the most unsatisfactory age we could pick; for then they are neither little girls nor old enough to have that touch of womanhood which is a great protection. They are merely hobbledehoys, and mostly God-forsaken ones at that. Sister, I count on our new plan of studies being so attractive

that girls who now leave at the age of fourteen will stay with us until they are sixteen. They will get that much more of good Catholic training, and in addition they will leave us with that characteristic of womanhood which is such a protection."

The good Sister after some argument consented to the plan. To do her justice I should add that several years later she told me that I had been right from the first. The world moves quickly. There are very few Sisters today who view with alarm the invasion of the young miss into the fields of commerce, and still fewer who point with pride to a long line of children trained to find their way into factories. The world does move.

The new commercial department started with three pupils, two of whom graduated. It was a modest beginning. In the second year there were four graduates and in the third year, fourteen graduates. Last year, 1928, one hundred and twenty-three girls received their certificates.

Hard upon the heels of this innovation the Brothers of Mary inaugurated a like department. In the beginning I had a little trouble in both departments. For instance, one Brother wanted to change his department into a high school, a second wanted to make it a three-year course. As for the Sisters, some of them were determined on getting into the course certain studies which, while taking much time in the classroom and more time in home study, had really nothing to do with business training.

It is so difficult to get people to see things clearly. I had thought the thing out carefully. To me the

situation was simple. There was no trouble about a high-school training; the Sisters of Notre Dame right around the corner from our school and the Jesuit Fathers one square up the street were giving such training in their high schools. Why, then, start another high school or introduce a three-year course? Considering the character and circumstances of the boys and girls attending St. Xavier Parochial School, I saw so many fine, lovable, and bright children—the children of poor struggling parents who needed their help and needed it badly. The thing for me, then, was to get up a course which would be as practical as possible and which could be made in the quickest time. The two-year commercial department was the answer.

For the past fifteen years or more boys and girls from every part of the city have come to us. In fact we have had to refuse many promising students. As this commercial department was intended primarily for the children of struggling parents, I insisted from the first that the tuition should be as low as possible. The primary department was free; the tuition of the commercial department was a minimum. For twenty years or more we lost money, and we were glad to lose it in so noble a cause, because of the needy Catholic boys and needy Catholic girls. We considered, and still consider, our commercial department a philanthropy. We are proud of the girls and the boys we have turned out.

Best of all, God in His kindness has given and continues to give to many a girl in this department a vocation to the religious life. In these late years

of mine, years of sickness and inability to work, one of my great consolations is to contemplate our business classes of boys and girls. I am proud of them, and I am proud with reason of the boys and the girls we have turned out into the business world in the last quarter of a century.

Our tuition charges in the commercial department today have been advanced. They are now twenty dollars a year. But in advancing the price we are putting more into our outlay, so that there is no danger of our ever making any money on the Commercial Department of St. Xavier School. Also, all the boys and girls of our own parish are now receiving this commercial training free of charge.

One word more. I could put down some wonderful stories connected with this department; but the heroes and heroines of these stories happen to be very much younger than I. Possibly they would not like to be shown up in print, and might in consequence refuse to attend my funeral. I would not like that at all.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FATHER FINN'S BOOKS

NOTE—The order in which the titles are here given, is that of the chronological issue of the books.

Percy Wynn; or making a boy of him.
Tom Playfair; or making a start.
Harry Dee; or working it out.
Claude Lightfoot; or how the problem was solved.
Mostly Boys. Short Stories.
Ethelred Preston; or the adventure of a newcomer.
Ada Merton.
New Faces and Old. Short Stories.
My Strange Friend.
Echoes from Bethlehem. A Christmas Miracle.
That Football Game and what came of it.
The Best Foot Forward and other stories.
His First and Last Appearance.
But Thy Love and Thy Grace.
The Fairy of the Snows.
That Office Boy.
Cupid of Campion.
Lucky Bob.
His Luckiest Year.
Facing Danger.
Bobby in Movieland.
On the Run.
Lord Bountiful.
The Story of Jesus.
Sunshine and Freckles.
Candles' Beams.
Boys' and Girls' Prayerbook.

A LIST OF FATHER FINN'S BOOKS WHICH WERE TRANSLATED INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

Percy Wynn, ou comment on devient un "boy." (Percy Wynn.)
Harry Dee. (*Harry Dee.*)

Tom Playfair. (*Tom Playfair.*)

Claude Lightfoot, ou comment le problème fut résolu. (*Claude Lightfoot.*)

Une Seule Fois. (*Mostly Boys.*)

Ethelred Preston ou les aventures d'un nouveau-venu. (*Ethelred Preston.*)

Oh, Ce Match! (*That Football Game.*)

Le meilleur pas en avant; et d'autres histoires. (*The Best Foot Forward.*)

Figures Amies. (*His First and Last Appearance.*)

Seulement Votre Amour et Votre Grâce. (*But Thy Love and Thy Grace.*)

La Fée des Nieges. (*The Fairy of the Snows.*)

Ce Garçon de Bureau. (*That Office Boy.*)

Le Cupidon de Campion Collège. (*Cupid of Campion.*)

Lucky Bob. (*Lucky Bob.*)

Sa Plus Heureuse Année. (*His Luckiest Year.*)

GERMAN

Percy Wynn. (*Percy Wynn.*)

Tom Playfair. (*Tom Playfair.*)

Hans Archer. (*Harry Dee.*)

Paul Springer. (*Claude Lightfoot.*)

Ada Merton. (*Ada Merton.*)

Philipp, de Kleine Saenger. (*His First and Last Appearance.*)

FLEMISH

Percy Wynn. (*Percy Wynn.*)

Tom Playfair. (*Tom Playfair.*)

Harry Dee. (*Harry Dee.*)

Claude Lightfoot. (*Claude Lightfoot.*)

Jongenstypen. (*Mostly Boys.*)

Ethelred Preston. (*Ethelred Preston.*)

Hol Zij Ouverwon. (*Ada Merton.*)

De Voetbalwedstryd. (*That Football Game.*)

Het Beste Beentje Vor. (*The Best Foot Forward.*)

Zyn Eerste en Laatste Optreden. (*His First and Last Appearance.*)

De Diamanten Ring. (*But Thy Love and Thy Grace.*)

Sneewitje. (*The Fairy of the Snows.*)

Een Kranig Kereltje. (*That Office Boy.*)

Geluksvogel. (*Lucky Bob.*)

Zyn Beste Yaar. (*His Luckiest Year.*)

Bobby in Filmland. (*Bobby in Movieland.*)

Op den Loop. (*On the Run.*)

Lord Bountiful. (*Lord Bountiful.*)

ITALIAN

Percy Wynn. Racconto Americano per i Ragazzi. (*Percy Wynn.*)

Tom Playfair. Racconto Americano per i Ragazzi. (*Tom Playfair.*)

Harry Dee. Racconto Americano per i Ragazzi. (*Harry Dee.*)

Claude Lightfoot. Racconto Americano per i Ragazzi. *Claude Lightfoot.*)

POLISH

Przygody Wesolego Tomka. (*Tom Playfair.*)⁷

Claude Lightfoot.

That Football Game.

The Fairy of the Snows.

} These are now in course of translation and publication.

BOHEMIAN

Jiri Mrstik. (*Claude Lightfoot.*)

Milek Z Kampionu. (*Cupid of Champion.*)

Krok za Krokem. (*The Best Foot Forward.*)

Certain of Father Finn's books were also translated into the Hungarian, Spanish, Caledonian and Portuguese languages. It was impossible, however, to procure data regarding the titles of these.

To afford blind boys and girls an opportunity to read his books, a number of his books were issued in "Braille" through various organizations both in the United States and in Great Britain.

Adaptations for dramatic purposes were also made at various times from some of his books, thus "The Wager of Gerald O'Rourke" was based on "Tom Playfair". This was, however, the only dramatization that was published. But quite a few arrangements for "private performances" were made from his books "Claude Lightfoot", "Percy Wynn", and "His First and Last Appearance".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lastly schooltext versions with notes of "Percy Wynn" and some other titles were issued for the use of students studying English in Germany and Belgium.

From this bibliography it will be readily seen what influence for good, Father Finn's books have exercised practically the world over.

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